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BUSHFIREbulletin

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By Rebel Talbert

21 January 2007 firefighters work on
Ku-ring-gai Chase Road containment
lines at the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai fire.

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FOREWORD



It's a great pleasure for me as Acting Commissioner to be able to speak to you all for the first time through this foreword. The last few months have seen some important personnel changes within the Service, but I'm very glad to say that this hasn't affected the Service's capacity or capability to protect communities across NSW from bush fire nor the other types of emergencies that you respond to.

Nor has it changed the level of access that members of the Service, particularly volunteers, have had to the office of the Commissioner. I, like Phil before me, am always open and willing to listen to your concerns, problems and of course your ideas about improving the Service and the way we operate. I can be contacted on 8741 5103 or rob.rogers@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

This season has seen major fires at many locations across the state, from Tumut and Bega in the south, to Dubbo in the west and Tamworth, Armidale and Glen Innes in the North. All these fires were compounded by the ongoing drought, which has caused some extraordinary fire behaviour. Fires have been burning fiercely in very low temperatures, with little wind and in relatively high humidity – something that many of us have not seen before, or for a long time.

Despite these conditions you have done an outstanding job containing and controlling all of these fires with minimal property loss and, most importantly, no loss of life. This result is solely due to your skills and dedication. One of the things that I've seen as I've moved around the State is our working relationship with other agencies such as National Parks and Wildlife Service, Forests NSW and NSW Fire Brigades. In fact, one of the things that most impressed me as I visited many of the incident control teams and fire grounds was the close cooperation between our crews and our colleagues from other agencies. This is the hallmark of NSW firefighting and is unique within Australia. Co-ordinated firefighting has long been a feature of this state's approach and it is great to see it in action.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all those volunteers and staff who were deployed out of area this fire season, both within NSW and interstate. These deployments are vital to our efforts to put maximum resources onto a fire to fight it effectively. Similarly, as we continually benefit from our interstate assistance, it is only fair that we provide whatever support we can when necessary. This season, for instance, we provided support specifically to Victoria, where more than a million hectares burnt out and dozens of homes were lost. Our sympathies go out to those in Victoria, Tasmania and other states who suffered in recent fires. We have experienced this many times ourselves and the losses are keenly felt.

Again, thank you all for your hard work throughout summer and I look forward to seeing and meeting with you while I occupy the seat of Acting Commissioner.

Rob Rogers
A/Commissioner

OUR VALUES UNDERPIN ALL OUR ACTIONS

INCIDENTS

BLUE MOUNTAINS FIRES 15 NOVEMBER 2006 - 3 DECEMBER 2006

By Rebel Talbert and Supt. Mal Cronstedt

Lightning strikes

On 13 November 2006, the Blue Mountains and Lithgow Districts experienced a significant storm event resulting in numerous dry lightning strikes. At 17:04hr on Tuesday 14 November a bushfire located at Hartley Vale was reported to Lithgow Fire Control Centre (FCC). RFS brigades from South Bowenfels, Clarence/Dargan and Marrangaroo were despatched and upon arrival reported the fire was 1-2ha in size with flame height of 1-2 metres and was rapidly moving uphill in inaccessible terrain.

Lithgow FCC immediately notified Blue Mountains FCC of the impending threat and Blue Mountains FCC deployed resources to the Darling Causeway (the Causeway).

“THE FIRE QUICKLY EXPANDED AND CONTINUED TO GROW UNCHECKED”

At 17:57hr further resources were deployed to the Causeway in an attempt to stop the fire from crossing the roadway into inaccessible terrain. NSWFB resources were deployed to protect properties along the Causeway and RFS crews undertook backburning operations along the roadway. Numerous spot fires from the main fire were extinguished east of the Causeway, however at about 23:30hr a spot fire ignited east of the Causeway that was not accessible to crews. The fire quickly expanded and continued to grow unchecked.

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2006

At 05:00hr on 15 November a Section 44 was declared for Blue Mountains and Lithgow Local Government Areas. Superintendent Mal Cronstedt was

appointed Incident Controller and the Incident Management Team (IMT) was established at Blue Mountains FCC.

Spot fire spreads rapidly

Resources deployed to the Causeway reported rapid spread of the spot fire and at 12:00hr the total fire area was estimated to be 500ha. Backburning along the Causeway continued with an emphasis on minimising further spot fires, containing the remaining fire west of the Causeway, protecting isolated properties along the roadway and monitoring the progress of the inaccessible fire east of the Causeway.

“BACKBURNING COMMENCED AROUND THE NORTHERN EDGE OF MT VICTORIA”

By 16:00hr the three fires (Lawson's Long Alley, Darling Causeway spotover and Burra Korain Head) had grown in total size to 780ha, with the spotover in the National Park estimated at 80ha. Backburning commenced around the northern edge of Mt Victoria with the aim of containing the fire west of the Causeway between the Causeway itself, Waltons Rd south of Hartley Vale, Hartley Vale Rd south west of Bell and within Lithgow on the west. Water bombing aircraft were being used to good effect on the western edge, as well as slowing the progress of fires east of the Causeway.

DAY 2: THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2006

Backburning operations on the northern edge of Mt Victoria were successfully carried out by 05:00hr. Consolidation of containment continued, as did consolidation of the edge along the Causeway.

Problematic areas around the north western edge near Hartley Valley Siding Road were addressed through aerial attack and Remote Area Firefighting Team (RAFT) insertion. The fires east of the Causeway continued to be

slowed by water bombing aircraft, while plans for backburning to protect Blackheath using the existing 'blackline' were being developed. At 23:30hr the total fire area was estimated at 1373ha.

“RAFT WERE NOT DEPLOYED INTO BURRA KORAIN HEAD DUE TO WEATHER CONDITIONS”

RAFT were not deployed into Burra Korain Head due to weather conditions. An uncontained spot fire burning north of the Hartley Vale containment line towards an electricity substation and Bell/Dargan was contained by ground crews and water bombing aircraft.

DAY 3: FRIDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2006

Mop up continues

The western and southern edges of the fire west of the Causeway continued to be consolidated with mop up by ground crews. Active fire on the northern edge of the fire continued to cause some difficulty, with water bombing and RAFT crews being deployed when safe.

“TWO FIRES EAST OF THE CAUSEWAY WERE BEING KEPT IN CHECK BY WATER BOMBING”

The two fires east of the Causeway were being kept in check by water bombing and the fire immediately east of the Causeway was largely contained, though the more isolated Burra Korain Head fire to the east remained uncontained.

The 'blackline' between Blackheath and Mt Victoria was re-established by combined agencies, with additional bulk water tankers from NSWFB as well as buoy walls established at Blackheath on Hat Hill Rd for water bombing operations. The fire was estimated to have burnt out 1767ha.



**DAVIDSON WERE
ONE OF THE
MANY CREWS
INVOLVED IN THE
CONTAINMENT OF
FIRES IN THE BLUE
MOUNTAINS 2007**

Photo by Bernie O'Rourke



DAY 4: SATURDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2006

The fire west of the Causeway continued to be consolidated, with good containment in place along the southern, western and eastern perimeters. The northern edge was largely contained, with ongoing monitoring, patrol, water bombing and ground crew work. The fire east of the Causeway remained uncontained, with firefighters having considerable difficulty in establishing solid containment lines due to inaccessibility and safety issues.

“DIFFICULTIES FACED AT BURRA KORAIN HEAD TRIGGERED THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE FIRST FALLBACK STRATEGIES”

Difficulties faced at Burra Korain Head triggered the commencement of the first fallback strategies. A backburning operation along the northern perimeter of Blackheath using the ‘blackline’ commenced in the evening.

Plans for the backburn along Hat Hill Sector through to Bells Line of Road (across the Grose River) and along Bells Line of Road to Bell was developed. The Pierces Pass backburn was assessed but trails required further work prior to implementation.

Water supply points at Browntown Oval and a relay at Hat Hill Rd were established to meet water demands for water bombing.

The fire was estimated to be at 2012ha.

DAY 5: SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2006

Consolidation of backburning along the ‘blackline’ north of Blackheath continued, with aerial incendiary operations.

“A RETARDANT LINE WAS ESTABLISHED USING FIXED WING AIRCRAFT”

A retardant line was established using fixed wing aircraft above Blackheath Walls. Timing of the backburn north of Blackheath was planned to meet the retardant line at first light and water bombing operations continued.

The Burra Korain Head fire continued to move towards Blackheath under a strong north westerly influence.

RAFT prepared Perry’s Lookdown walking trail and a hand tool link below Banks Walls.

The backburn planned for Bells Line of Road was implemented in the evening with the introduction of fire at the Pierces Pass/Bells Line of Road intersection by combined agencies. A breakout was reported at 20:45hr which was investigated and discovered to be unfounded.

“FULL DISTANCE OF THE BACKBURNING WAS NOT ACHIEVED”

Backburning also commenced on Pierces Pass (Hungerford’s Track) below the rainforest and cliff edge towards the Grose River. Full distance of the backburning was not achieved due to weather conditions.

Continual water supply problems made it necessary to maintain bulk water tankers for the duration of the campaign. The fire was estimated to have burnt out 3863ha.

DAY 6: MONDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2006

The Pierces Pass backburn was completed and crews continued to mop up and black out the edge. The fire was now largely contained within the perimeter bounded by containment lines north of Mt Victoria and Blackheath, Hat Hill Rd and an extension through Pierces Pass to Bells Line of Road, along Bells Line of Road and back to existing contained edges on the western edge of the fire.

“GROUND CREWS WERE WITHDRAWN DUE TO SAFETY CONCERNS”

A small spot fire over the Pierces Pass containment lines on the eastern edge was slowed by water bombing aircraft. Ground crews were withdrawn due to safety concerns. Further fall back options and containment lines to the east were planned. The fire had burnt out about 5732ha.

DAY 7: TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2006

The fire took a major run and significantly breached eastern containment lines below Blackheath Walls along the Grose River and behind Perry's Lookdown. Remote properties to the north of Blackheath were potentially under threat. Rapid water bombing operations slowed the fire spreading to the east. Other sectors remained contained and crews further consolidated edges of the fire. Poor fire weather was forecast for Wednesday 22 November 2006.

Three new fallback divisions were identified along the 'blackline'.

Mop up procedures continued along the Bells Line of Road, with property protection in place at Mt Tomah and Hat Hill Rd. The fire was estimated to have burnt out 8335ha.

DAY 8: WEDNESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2006

Extreme fire conditions were experienced with north westerly winds up to 90kph, humidity below 16 percent and temperatures above 30 degrees. Two spot fires occurred approximately five km north of Hazelbrook and Woodford. The eastern-most spot fire was rapidly extinguished by water bombers, while the western spot fire grew in size to approximately 20ha. Continual water bombing operations slowed the fire, while resources were assembled in anticipation of property protection along the Great Western Highway.

"ACTIVE FIRE IN THE GOVETTS SECTOR THREATENED PROPERTY"

Backburning operations south of the Bells Line of Road were undertaken to prevent the fire spreading further north as conditions eased. Active fire in the Govetts Sector threatened property and crews implemented strategies to limit fire spread.

At 02:30hr crews reported fire crowning in the Explorer's Brook area.

Numerous NSWFB and RFS strike teams were deployed to strategic locations along the Great Western Highway with three strike teams deployed to Mt Tomah and Bells Line of Road. Crews commenced backburning operations along Evans Lookout to Hat Hill Rd at Blackheath.

"A SIGNIFICANT COLUMN DEVELOPED OVER THE MAIN FIRE WHICH WAS VISIBLE FROM MOST OF THE SYDNEY BASIN"

A significant column developed over the main fire which was visible from most of the Sydney basin. A pyro-cumulous cloud developed to 6000 metres over Mt Banks from approximately 12:30hr which created extreme fire behaviour and spotting. The Blue Gum Forest was impacted by fire. The total fire area was now 10747ha.

DAY 9: THURSDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2006

Weather and fire conditions eased and the two spot fires were contained by water bombing aircraft. Progressive backburning was undertaken to keep pace with the fire along Bells Line of Road. Backburning operations in Govetts Sector and along the 'blackline' continued to be consolidated and crews worked on hotspots and breakouts.

"PREPARATION WAS UNDERTAKEN TO PROTECT ASSETS AT MT TOMAH"

Preparation was undertaken to protect assets at Mt Tomah as well as planning for more extensive backburning along the 'blackline'.

A small outbreak from a backburn temporarily threatened property but was quickly contained without incident.

Backburning was attempted along Linden and Faulconbridge Ridges with minimal depth achieved due to unsuitable weather conditions.

DAY 10: FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2006**Spot fires contained**

High overnight humidity did not allow for effective backburning along the 'blackline' and Govetts Sector, though conditions eased significantly through the easterly influence. Spot fires were effectively contained and ground crews were inserted to consolidate the edge. Preparatory earthworks around Bilpin and Mt Irvine continued.

RAFT and ground crews continued to work on spot fires north of Linden and Hazelbrook. Ground crews put out and mopped up the backburn along Faulconbridge Ridge.

DAY 11: SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2006**"CREWS BEGAN PLANNING FOR BACKBURNING OPERATIONS ON THE EAST OF THE 'BLACKLINE'"**

Weather conditions eased which severely limited backburning operations and reduced fire intensity. Consolidation of all edges continued and crews began planning for backburning operations on the east of the 'blackline'. Ground crews and RAFT continued direct attack on the spotovers at Mt Hay and Thunder Gorge at Mt Tomah as well as directly attacking hot spots on the eastern edge of the fire identified by aerial reconnaissance. The fire was estimated to have burnt out 13893ha.

DAY 12: SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2006

Conditions remained benign with an easterly wind influence. Consolidation of edges continued with an emphasis on direct attack based on aerial intelligence.

DAY 13: MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2006**"INTENSIVE USE OF FLIR AND AERIAL OBSERVATION IDENTIFIED AREAS OF CONCERN"**

Benign conditions continued and crews worked to consolidate the edge of the fire while planning for use of the 'blackline' to the east. Intensive use of FLIR and aerial observation identified areas of concern and ground crews and RAFT were deployed to extinguish hot spots.

The fire was classed as 'being controlled' and the burnt out area revised at 14470ha. Deteriorating weather conditions were predicted for Tuesday 28 November.

DAY 14: TUESDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2006

Very high fire weather eventuated though not to the extent predicted. Containment lines held and consolidation of edges continued.

DAY 15: WEDNESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2006

Mild conditions continued and crews consolidated the edges of the fire and directly attacked the fire in accessible sectors.

DAY 16: THURSDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2006

Mild conditions continued and crews worked on consolidation.

DAY 17: FRIDAY 1 DECEMBER 2006

The fire was classed as 'contained'.

DAY 18: SATURDAY 2 DECEMBER 2006

Further consolidation continued.

DAY 19: SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER 2006

Benign conditions continued and the fire was classed as 'patrol' with very few hot spots detected.

The Section 44 for Blue Mountains and Lithgow Local Government Areas was revoked at 18:00hr and incident control handed back to NPWS. Ground crews, RAFT and aircraft continued to patrol the fire.

BLUE MOUNTAINS FIRES - RESOURCES

BLUE MOUNTAINS RFS BRIGADES

Bell
Blackheath/Mt Victoria
Blaxland
Blue Mountains Group Support
Blue Mountains Headquarters
Bullaburra
Faulconbridge
Glenbrook-Lapstone
Hazelbrook
Katoomba-Leura
Lawson
Linden
Medlow Bath
Megalong Valley
Mt Riverview
Mt Tomah
Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine
Shipley
Valley Heights
Warrimoo
Wentworth Falls
Winmalee
Woodford

BAULKHAM HILLS BRIGADES

Annangrove
Baulkham Hills Comms
Kellyville
Kenthurst
Maroota
North Rocks
Round Corner
Rouse Hill

CUMBERLAND BRIGADES

Berkshire Park
Horsley Park
Llandilo
Londonderry
Marsden Park
Mulgoa
Orchard Hills
Schofields

GOSFORD BRIGADES

Gosford
Gosford Bulk Water
Kariong
Narara

HAWKESBURY BRIGADES

Bilpin
Blaxlands Ridge
East Kurrajong
Ebenezer
Freemans Reach
Glossodia
Grose Vale
Grose Wold
Headquarters
Kurrajong
Kurrajong Heights
Lower Macdonald
Mountain Lagoon
Oakville
Tennyson
Upper Colo
Wilberforce
Yarramundi
Communications
Catering
Hawkesbury RAFT

HORNSBY/KU-RING-GAI BRIGADES

Arcadia
Berowra
Berowra Waters
Brisbane Waters
Brooklyn
Cowan
Dural
Galston
Hornsby
Ku-ring-gai
Mt Ku-ring-gai
Westleigh

ILLAWARRA BRIGADES

Bulli
Farmborough Heights
Gerringong
Helesburgh
Oak Flats
Stanwell Park

LITHGOW BRIGADES

Capertee
Clarence Dargan
Cullen Bullen
Hartley
Kanimbla
Lithgow Comms
Marrangaroo
Portland
Rydal
South Bowenfells
Wallerawang

MACARTHUR BRIGADES

Austral
Bringelly
Camden West
Casula
Catherine Field
Hoxton Park
Kemps Creek
Kentlyn
Leppington
Lynwood Park
Macarthur Group
Menangle Park
Minto Heights
Narellan
Varroville
Wedderburn

SUTHERLAND

Bundeena
Grays Point
Loftus
Maianbar
Menai
Sandy Point
Waterfall

THE LAKES CATERING

WARRINGAH/PITTWATER BRIGADES

Beacon Hill
Belrose
Coal & Candle
Cottage Point
Davidson
Duffys Forest
Ingleside
Terrey Hills
Tumbledown Dick
Warringah HQ

WINGECARRIBEE

Colo Vale
Mittagong



NORTH WEST TEAM SENDS RECORD NUMBERS OUT OF AREA

Story by Supt. Mark Ryan

With most of the area in drought, volunteers from the North West Team (Bogan, Coonamble, Warren and Walgett) have been very active this year sending strike teams throughout the region and interstate.

“VOLUNTEERS HAVE BEEN KEEN TO ASSIST OUR NEIGHBOURS THROUGHOUT THE SEASON”

Volunteers have been keen to assist our neighbours throughout the season, deploying some nine times since November, 2006.

“EXPERIENCE GAINED BY LOCAL VOLUNTEERS STRENGTHENS THEIR ABILITY TO CONTROL FIRES WITHIN



THE TEAM AREA”

Team Manager, Superintendent Mark Ryan, encourages the deployments as the skills and experience gained by local volunteers strengthens their ability to control fires within the team area, particularly giving a number of new Group Officers more exposure to increased command and control capabilities and integration with incident management teams.

The deployments were as follows:

Dubbo

- Strike Team West 9 Forward Rapid Response Deployment.
- Staged at Dubbo from 21 November 2006 for 72 hours.
- Deployed to Wellington on 22 November 2006 assisting in the containment of fire and then re-directed to the Molong Section 44, where they completed property protection, backburning and mop up for the rest of their commitment.

Units:

Group 7, Gular 7, Lightning Ridge 1 and appliances from Far West and Barwon Darling Zones.

Mudgee

- Strike Teams West 10, 12 and 14 formed and responded to the Mudgee Section 44 from 26 November 2006 and rotated over the two weeks of the fire's progression. In addition to the formal strike teams, Nyngan 9 and Gulargambone 7 responded as a 12 hour strike team completing 12 hours work on the night of 28 November 2006 where multiple other fires were ignited from lightning strikes.

Units:

Group 7, Deputy Group 1, Coonamble 1A, Grawin 2, Lightning Ridge 7, Walgett HQ 7, Warren 7.

Victoria

- Strike Team West 18 was responded to Victoria on 17 December 2006 as part of the NSWRFs assistance and worked on the Mansfield Complex for 72 hours.
- Units: Group 12, Coonamble 1A, Lightning Ridge 1, Warren HQ 1, Walgett HQ 1 and FCO2 as RTC.

Goonoo

- Strike Teams West 21 and 22 responded to the Goonoo Section 44 to complete two 72 hour shifts day and night starting 14 January 2007. Crews assisted with containment line construction, backburning and mop up and patrol of the fire.

Units:

Deputy Group 1, Group 4, Grawin 2, Gulargambone 7, Lightning Ridge 7.

Staff Involvement

Staff from the North West Team have been responded in a range of roles to the Section 44s at Molong, Forbes, Narrabri, Dubbo, Victoria and Wellington.

Overall, a fantastic effort has been put in so far by the volunteers and staff of the North West Team.



Firefighters work to hold the fire on Ku-ring-gai Chase Road.
Photo by Rebel Talbert

MT KU-RING-GAI FIRE 21 JANUARY TO 1 FEBRUARY 2007

Story by Kane Lambkin and Rebel Talbert

Extrême fire conditions were forecast for Sydney on Sunday 21 January 2007 and local RFS volunteer firefighters from Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai districts, NSW Fire Brigades and National Parks and Wildlife Service crews were on high alert.

“A FIRE WAS REPORTED IN AN ISOLATED SECTION OF KU-RING-GAI CHASE NATIONAL PARK”

At 1604 hours a fire was reported in an isolated section of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, between the northern railway line and the F3 Freeway. Two RFS units and a Group Officer as well as two NSW Fire Brigades units were dispatched to investigate. Whilst *en route* the Group Officer advised that more units were required after confirming a large column of smoke issuing from the location.

“THE FIRE QUICKLY CROSSED THE F3 FREEWAY CLOSING THE ROAD TO PUBLIC TRAFFIC”

The initial response was made up of all Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai local units and

task forces were deployed from Baulkham Hills, Warringah Pittwater, Macarthur and Cumberland with immediate deployment of air support through State Operations. Under very hot and windy conditions the fire quickly crossed the F3 Freeway closing the road to public traffic and continued to spread eastward toward Cowan Creek and south toward the suburb of Mt Ku-ring-gai.

Section 44 declared

At 1645 hours a section 44 was declared for the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Local Government Areas.

By 1800 hrs 30 fire fighting units and five helicopters were working to protect properties and slow the progress of the fire. Incident Management Team personnel and ground crews established broad objectives to prevent the spread of the fire beyond potential control lines to the east and south. Backburning operations began behind homes in Harwood Street at Mt Ku-ring-gai in Harwood Division and continued along the F3 Freeway and Ku-ring-gai Chase Road. No control lines existed in the upper Apple Tree Creek catchments.

Private property under threat

Threats included private property, the Kalkari Discovery Centre, an adjacent cottage and the historic National Parks Regional Office. The communities of Mt Ku-ring-gai, Mt Colah and Berowra were impacted heavily by smoke and ember attack.

“FIRE SPREAD WAS SLOWED BY WATER BOMBING OPERATIONS”

The fire spread was slowed by water bombing operations but when aircraft were grounded at nightfall, fire activity increased and the fire reached Winson Bay and spotted across Cowan Creek, south of Cotton Tree Bay. Steep and rugged topography with many minor cliff lines in the Apple Tree Creek catchments and the fall from the F3 Freeway to Cowan Creek made containment difficult and hazardous.

Flames over three metres high

Overnight the main fire continued to burn actively with flame heights reported over three metres and some crown fire activity, particularly in Berowra Division. An inaccessible spot fire was reported and confirmed to the south of Kalkari Discovery Centre in Chase Division.

“F3 FREEWAY REMAINED CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC”

The F3 Freeway remained closed to the public from the Berowra exit in the north to the Ku-ring-gai Chase road overpass in the south to allow safe operation of fire fighting vehicles.

The fire jumped the F3 Freeway forcing its closure and the closure of the Pacific Highway.
Photo by Rebel Talbert



Day 2 - Monday 22 January 2007
Fire status: GOING
Burnt area: 376 hectares
Recourses: 30 RFS appliances
19 NSWFB appliances
4 NPWS appliances
9 Aircraft

Major road closures

Backburning operations along the F3 Freeway were successfully completed overnight and completed an effective containment line to the west of the fire.

The fire had burnt to the water line of Cowan Creek and south easterly winds caused several significant spot fires.

Strong winds created major spot fire activity and forced the closure of the F3 Freeway, the Pacific Highway and the Northern Rail Line. The Ku-ring-gai Chase Road back burn successfully contained the fire to the south but inaccessible terrain meant the spot fire

burning south of Kalkari Discovery Centre in Chase Division was unable to be contained. Crews established a control line at the Waratah track to prevent fire spread to the north.

Crews worked throughout the day to limit the fire impacting on Mt Ku-ring-gai, Apple Tree Bay, Bobbin Head Picnic Area, Kalkari Visitors Centre and the NPWS Regional Office. Crews worked to establish and consolidated containment lines along Waratah Track east to Cowan Creek.

“GROUND CREWS WERE SUPPORTED BY WATER BOMBING AIRCRAFT”

RFS firefighters were deployed to contain and monitor spot fires south of Cotton Tree Bay east of Cowan Creek, and to contain the larger spot fire south of Kalkari Discovery Centre near Cockle Creek. Ground crews were supported by water bombing aircraft and

a dozer worked lines to the south and north of the spot fire in preparation for back burning operations.

NSWFB crews continue to mop up patrol behind houses and along the F3.

The F3 Freeway was reopened at 0905 hours in both directions to reduce traffic build up, but fire intensity meant the F3 was closed again at 1200 hours.

RFS ground crews reported south easterly winds gusting up to 30 km/h which tested northern containment lines.

Firefighters continued to protect the Kalkari Discovery Centre, an adjacent cottage, the NPWS Regional Office and Berowra Railway Station.

The Pacific Highway was re-opened and both lanes of the F3 were re-opened at 1500 hours.

Day 3 - Tuesday 23 January 2007

Status: BEING CONTROLLED

Burnt area: 965 hectares

Recourses in the field: 18 RFS appliances
10 NSWFB appliances
7 NPWS appliances
6 Aircraft

Forecast weather conditions: 30 degrees,
43 percent humidity, wind from NE 20-
30km/hr FDI 12 High

Cockle Creek spot fire

Crews worked along the southern section of Waratah Gully Track and continued to monitor the fire along Cowan Creek. The Main focus for the day was to contain the Cockle Creek spot fire and continue back burning operations.

“THE FIRE HAD BURNT DOWN TO COWAN CREEK ACROSS THE ENTIRE COWAN DIVISION”

RFS firefighters reported that the fire had burnt down to Cowan Creek across the entire Cowan Division. Good containment lines were now established along the Waratah Gully Trail and boat patrols were established to mop up and patrol the Cowan Water foreshore. NSWFB crews continued to mop up and patrol the railway easement, Mt Ku-ring-gai village, the Pacific Highway and the F3.

“THE IMT RECEIVED NUMEROUS CALLS FROM ST IVES RESIDENTS DUE TO HEAVY SMOKE DECENT AND LIGHTING ACTIVITY”

Light to moderate rain falls were reported and descending smoke in the Berowra and St Ives area were investigated. The IMT received numerous calls from St Ives residents due to heavy smoke decent and lighting activity. NSWFB and RFS crews were deployed to monitor the area

Bottom: 183 lengths hose were lifted out of the fireground by helicopter.
Photo by Peter Griffiths



Photo by Rebel Talbert



and although nothing was found, crew continued to monitor and keep a presence in the area.

Day 4 - Wednesday 24 January 2007
Status: BEING CONTROLLED
Current Area Burnt: 965 hectares
Recourses in the field: 7 RFS appliances
4 NSWFB appliances
2 NPWS appliances
1 Aircraft

Slippery when wet

The fire ground experienced light rain falls overnight with Hornsby reporting 10.6mm and Berowra 13.2mm. A majority of crews were released as a result of low fire activity and slippery working conditions. Boat crews mopped up and patrolled the foreshore of Cowan Water and Cockle Creek area but were stood down due to weather conditions.

Crews continued to patrol and mop up along all containment lines and the spot fire between Cockle Creek and Bobbin Head Rd was mopped up.

Day 5 - Thursday 25 January 2007
Status: BEING CONTROLLED
Current Area Burnt: 965 hectares
Recourses in the field: 4 RFS appliances
2 NPWS appliances
1 Aircraft

Mop up and black out

The fire ground experienced light drizzle overnight and into the morning. Crews were deployed to patrol and mop up all containment lines. RFS, NPWS and SES crews were deployed for mop up and black out tasks concentrated in the Chase and Cowan Divisions.

“SES CREWS ASSISTED WITH THE REMOVAL OF FALLEN TREES”

Harwood Division was dormant and patrolled at regular intervals. Cowan Division was patrolled by NPWS boat crews and mopping up duties continued with a focus on smoking trees and logs along the creek. Chase Division was mopped up and patrolled by RFS, and NPWS crews with a focus on the Cockle Creek spot over. SES crews assisted with the removal of fallen trees along the Chase Rd, down to Bobbin Head. Berowra Division was dormant and patrolled at regular intervals. A joint RFS and NPWS community liaison area was set up at Bobbin Head to provide information about the fire and to answer questions from members of the public.

“NO HELICOPTERS WERE ACTIVELY WORKING DUE TO LOW VISIBILITY”

No helicopters were actively working due to low visibility but one machine remained tasked to this fire as a precaution.

Day 6 - Friday 26 January 2007
Status: CONTAINED
Current Area Burnt: 965 hectares
Recourses in the field: 1 RFS appliance
2 NPWS appliances
3 Aircraft

Forecast weather conditions: Chance of an early shower, temperature high 20s, light to moderate north easterly winds.

Patrol and mop up continues

Crews continued to patrol and mop up all containment lines and ground resources were tasked to extinguish any spot fires using direct attack and aircraft as required.

“THE MAJORITY OF SMOKING TREES AND LOGS WERE LOCATED IN CHASE DIVISION”

Harwood Division remained dormant and was patrolled by aircraft. Cowan Division was patrolled on foot and NPWS crews walked the Berowra Track from the northern and southern ends to locate and extinguish smoking trees with the assistance of aircraft. Chase Division was patrolled on the ground and from the air. The majority of smoking trees and logs were located in Chase Division. Berowra Division remained dormant and was patrolled by aircraft.

Crews monitored closed tracks for unauthorised entry, and waterways for unauthorised landing onto burnt ground.

At 1300 hours weather on the fire ground was warm and sunny with temperature at 29 degrees, humidity at 64 percent and winds from the north east gusting to 10 km/h.

Days 7 to 11 - Saturday 27 to Wednesday 31 January 2007
Status: PATROL
Current Area Burnt: 965 hectares
Recourses in the field: 1 RFS appliance
2 NPWS appliances

Forecast weather for Saturday 27: Fine, temperature 30 degrees, north westerly winds with late southerly change, likely Very High Fire Danger.

Fire declared out

Firefighters from the RFS and NPWS continued to patrol the fire and extinguish any remaining smoking trees. Crews and aircraft worked to recover 183 lengths of 65mm, 38mm and 25mm hose that remained on hand tool lines and containment lines. Rehabilitation strategies were implemented by NPWS.

The Section 44 for Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Local Government Areas was revoked at 1800 hours on 29 January 2007 and on Thursday 1 February 2007 the fire was declared out after burning 965.8 hectares.



GOODS TRAIN DERAILMENT AT EUABALONG WEST – FAR WEST TEAM AREA – 14 JANUARY 2007

By Bill Britt

At approximately 1530hr on Sunday 14 January a “000” call came to a FWT Duty Officer for attendance at a train derailment at Euabalong West. No further details were provided other than it was near the Euabalong silo siding. Crews were activated from Euabalong Rural and Euabalong Central where Cat 1 and Cat 7 RFS Tankers are located. A NSW Fire Brigades pumper from Lake Cargelligo was also responded.

“RAIL CARRIAGES AND FREIGHT CONTAINERS LITTERED THE TRACK WHICH MADE GETTING PAST EXTREMELY DIFFICULT”

It took units longer than expected to reach the derailment, due to its remote location. It turned out the derailment was not at the siding but about 2km further west along the rail line. What confronted the volunteers when they first arrived was sheer devastation. Rail carriages and freight containers littered the track which made getting past extremely difficult. The first consideration was obviously to determine if any persons were injured or worse, but thankfully the engineers were up front in the locomotive and were therefore unharmed.

Dangerous cargo complicates the scene

Once the manifest was located and

dangerous goods were confirmed as being on the train, the area was cordoned off and RFS crews waited for NSWFB to arrive as it was now declared to be a HAZMAT incident. The Captain of the NSWFB crew from Lake Cargelligo pronounced the scene to be far bigger than local resources could handle, so called for support from out-of-area NSWFB crews. A Regional Zone Commander was also requested, who then took control of the incident. An Inspector from the RFS Far West Team was also sent to the scene and was appointed Planning and RFS liaison officer within the IMT.

The next problem was to identify whether or not there was danger of combustion and to locate any dangerous goods. NSWFB Crews donned SCBA and fully encapsulated chemical suits and carried out reconnaissance of the incident to determine location and any further dangers. The loads were very unstable and as only dangerous goods are recorded on the manifest, there was a need to ascertain what else may be on the train.

Leakage creates another hazard

“IN SUCH A LARGE CONCENTRATED SPILL NO ONE COULD DETERMINE WHAT THE IMPACT WOULD BE”

The dangerous goods listed were 1.2 tonnes hydrogen peroxide, 1.2 tonnes oxidizing agent, and 2 x 22,000L tanks of liquid sodium cyanide. Crews soon also discovered that a number of carriages held containers of glyphosate, a hazardous chemical, of which a large quantity had been spilled. Approximately 15,000L of the chemical were estimated to have leaked, which became a major issue due to access,



cleanup and the environmental impact. In small quantities the chemical breaks down in water and temperature. But in such a large concentrated spill no one could determine what the impact would be. EPA and Cobar Council environment officers were called to determine what disposal and cleanup methods would be undertaken.

A complete search and identification of containers and loads continued. This carried on throughout Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from daylight till dark. A 24-hour shift was organised for the Tuesday to attempt to finalise the search and stabilise the remaining dangerous goods, which were soon located and declared safe to remove from the containers.



Cleaning up together

“VOLUNTEERS ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED FOR THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY REPRESENTED THEIR COMMUNITY”

By this time approximately 100 NSWFB firefighters were in attendance, supported by RFS volunteers from Euabalong Rural, Euabalong Central, Mt Hope Brigade and Eremeran Brigade. The local support was outstanding and the volunteers are to be congratulated for the manner in which they represented their community and the RFS. Eventually the scene was released to the

railway authorities after the chemicals were cleaned up and investigators had performed their part.

The event highlighted the need for more exercises and discussion related to remote emergencies.





RFS DEPLOYS TO VICTORIA

Story Cameron Wade

“FIRES ACROSS VICTORIA DURING DECEMBER 2006 AND JANUARY 2007 BURNT THOUGH OVER A MILLION HECTARES”

The NSW Rural Fire Service sent hundreds of volunteers to Victoria this fire season after fires across Victoria during December 2006 and January 2007 burnt though over a million hectares. For the RFS the commitment started on 7 December 2006 with strike teams made up of crews from Hume, Corowa/Berrigan, Mid Murray and Lower Western Zones (Region South) heading into the Mansfield area on the western side of the Great Dividing Range.

On Friday 8 December Region East strike teams were formed and sent to the Wangaratta and Bairnsdale areas to assist the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Department of Sustainability and the Environment (DSE) crews. Firefighting activities ranged from blacking out and mopping up to strenuous property protection due to fierce fire behaviour.

Region South continued to provide strike teams on a rotational basis until 14 December, with Region West sending two strike teams to the western side of the Victorian fires on 16 December. Firefighters from Coonamble, Walgett, Warren, Bourke, Hay and Far West Zone stayed in Victoria until 20 December,

while Region East had crews from Blue Mountains, Baulkham Hills, Hornsby, Warringah/Pittwater, Illawarra, Sutherland, Wollondilly, Cumberland Zone and Macarthur Zone in Victoria until 21 December.

Rain the best Christmas present

It rained over much of the fire grounds during the Christmas period, prompting a trip home for the NSW firefighters. This relief, however, was short lived as the fires became a problem again on 6 January. Strike teams from Region South, Far South Coast were moved into Victoria, and in particular, the Boulder Creek region near Orbost. By 9 January extra Region South crews from Shoalhaven and Lake George had joined the fight near Swifts Creek and Bairnsdale.

“REGION EAST ONCE AGAIN SENT STRIKE TEAMS OVER THE BORDER”

On 14 January, Region East once again sent strike teams over the border and commitment continued for all RFS crews until 23 January. In most cases the first crews from each region took the tankers down with further crews following by either coach or aircraft transfers. Aircraft options were limited, however, due to smoke across the state. Many aircraft including those potentially used to ferry NSW firefighters in and out were unable to take off.

Working alongside the Region East strike teams was a contingent of support personnel including mechanics,

communications volunteers and NSW Ambulance paramedics. A liaison officer and support staff were in each of the IMTs as well as in CFA headquarters in Melbourne.

Helping our neighbours

Over 1050 volunteers and staff took part in the Victorian firefighting effort over the two periods. Many of the deployments were a very steep learning curve for all involved. As time went on and RFS got to know how the Victorians operated, the method of and amount of deployment was altered, with the transportation of firefighters to and from Victoria also changing with differing situations. Anecdotally however, it seemed that those who attended felt richer for the experience and would go again to help our friends in the southern state if required, feelings which are very much reciprocated.

During deployments to Victoria, Cameron Wade had the opportunity to talk to some of the volunteers assisting the firefighting efforts, and captured their thoughts ahead of the experience.

Kim White Basin View

C: So Kim, you're probably one of the newest members in the plane here, how long have you been a member of the service?

K: Five months.

C: And how's it going?

K: Fantastic, I love it. Yeah, it's just great.

C: What do you actually like so much about it?

K: Probably the excitement, and also now



that I've been in it for a few months the comradeship with the guys of the Brigade – it's just a lovely little family, its great.

C: Which Brigade are you in?

K: Falls Creek.

C: Ok, so is it a fairly busy Brigade, or a fairly quiet Brigade?

K: Reasonably – it's been a very quiet season so it's a bit hard for me to tell – I haven't been in that long.

C: So, we're going down to Victoria, how does that feel? Are you excited, nervous - you obviously wouldn't have been on any of the trips before that the Brigade's gone on – what are your feelings at the moment?

K: I'm excited. Yeah, I can't wait to get there. It's a great experience.

C: What have you heard about the fires down there? What are you expecting?

K: I'm not sure, I've been watching the website, and looking at all the fires down there, and I know 20 new fires started yesterday, but from what they said today it's going to be a pretty quiet weekend, so I'll just take whatever comes.

C: What are you expecting to do in the Service? Do you want to get into higher ranks or anything like that; have you even thought that far ahead?

K: No, not really. No, I've just always been interested in the Rural Fire Service, and I just never had the opportunity, so I took it. So, I haven't really thought that far ahead.

C: Finally, how did you find basic training?

K: Basic training? Fantastic. Great, yeah - I can't wait to do more.

Vic Walker
Group Captain - Shoalhaven

C: How long have you been a member of the organisation?

V: I've been in the organisation for 26 years. This is the first deployment where I've actually gotten to Victoria, last time I was turned around at Cairn River. I've been on out-of-area deployments to Guy Fawkes National Park Dorrigo, Warragamba Dam, Crookwell, and attended lots of incidents in Shoalhaven.

C: So, being your first deployment to

Victoria, what are you expecting? What stories have you heard – are you expecting it to be very different?

V: I've followed the fires in Victoria in the public media – I'm aware that the forecast weather is for a mild day now, but I'll take it as it comes. I expect it could be anything from wildly exciting to terribly boring.

C: Have you spoken to many people who have been down here? You mentioned you missed out on the last trip – have you spoken to anyone who has come back?

V: No, I haven't spoken to anybody who's been on the previous deployment for Shoalhaven, this time. I did speak to those who actually went down in January last year though, and they found it a very rewarding experience.

C: So what's kept you in the Rural Fire Service for so long?

V: I enjoy what I do, and there's also a certain element of self-interest – I live in a rural area, and a functioning Rural Fire Service is my insurance against fire. The premium that I pay on it is to be involved, and to make sure that the organisation works.

C: Do you find that the people in your area are very aware of what the Rural Fire Service does? Are there many people in your area that are a part of the brigade?

V: The area of Shoalhaven that I come from has a large influx of new residents and holiday makers (principally from the Sydney Metropolitan area), and they are not aware of the Rural Fire Service. When we had the 2001 fires in Shoalhaven, I closed my business from Monday to Friday, and on the weekends when I ran the business – which was a retail nursery – I spent as much time telling people about the nature of the Rural Fire Service and its volunteer ethic, as I did selling plants. So there's a long way to go to get everybody in the community to know how the Rural Fire Service functions.

C: Hopefully we can do some of that?

V: Hopefully, yes. But there is a big divide between city and country. Until people move into country areas that are exposed to volunteer organisations, they really don't understand the function of our organisation or SES, or any of the other volunteer organisations which they depend upon.

C: If somebody were to read this and want to join the Rural Fire Service, what would be your advice to them?

V: I believe it can be a very rewarding experience, and that there's a tremendous sense of comradeship within the organisation. There's a lot of satisfaction in helping other people at the same time as helping yourself, and I think a lot of people end up a lot better educated due to the training they undertake, and learn to work in a team.

C: That's great Vic, thank you.

For more interviews and photos, visit the NSW Rural Fire Service website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

Photo by Vision Communicators - Dubbo



Below: 700ha area burnt at 0900hrs

Below: 3,300ha area burnt at 1600hrs

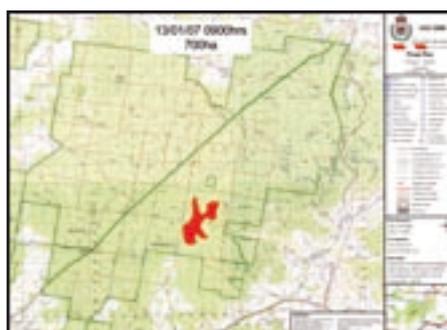
DUBBO FIRE 12 JANUARY TO 25 JANUARY 2007

Story by Rebel Talbert and Supt. John Jenks

At about 1550hrs on Friday 12 January a smoke sighting was reported by a local land owner north east of the Goan Creek Road north of Ballimore. Additional reports reported that a fire was burning 30 to 40 km along the Mendooran Road. Four RFS brigades were responded and National Parks and Wildlife Service was notified. Fire Control staff travelled to two separate high points at Bourke Hill and Mugga Hill and took magnetic compass bearings to locate the approximate location of the fire by triangulation.

Large volumes of black smoke indicated the fire was burning well and was of considerable size.

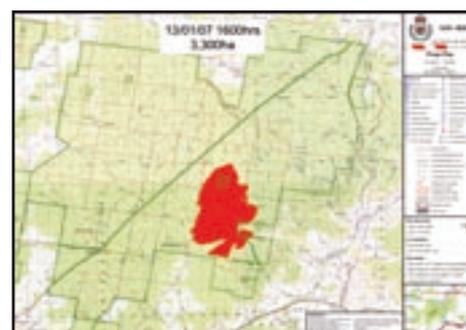
At 1638 hours the fire was located and confirmed to be burning about 200 metres north of Frost Road in compartment 54 of the Goonoo Community Conservation Area. Crews were deployed to protect a property on Frost Road as the fire burned furiously towards Frost Road. Crews determined that Frost Road would not hold the fire and a backburn was successfully put in to hold the fire.



“IT WAS DETERMINED FROM THE POINT OF ORIGIN THAT THE FIRE WAS STARTED BY A LIGHTNING STRIKE”

It was determined from the point of origin that the fire was started by a lightning strike. At 1740 hours the weather conditions were reported as 38 degrees, 26 percent humidity with wind from the west south west gusting to 8kph.

Two fixed wing bombers were inbound to Dubbo from Gunnedah and at 1832 hours Fire Bomber 277 reported that the fire was approximately 100 hectares in size and was crowning over 800 metres with spotting activity up to 200 metres ahead of the fire.



At 1856 hours Dubbo Group 2 moved control and the staging area back to Mendooran Road for safety due to erratic wind conditions.

“AT 1900 HOURS ON 12 JANUARY 2007 A SECTION 44 WAS DECLARED”

At 1900 hours on 12 January 2007 a section 44 was declared for the Local Government Areas of Dubbo, Wellington, Warrumbungle's and Gilgandra and Superintendent John Jenks was appointed Incident Controller.

At 1932 hours the fire jumped Frost Road in a southerly direction into compartment 55 and all personnel were moved back to the staging area for protection.

Below: The Nivara staging area.
Photo by Tim Ryan

“THE WIND CHANGED AND THE FIRE THREATENED ‘SPRING CREEK’ HOMESTEAD”

Weather conditions were continually changing due to storm cells with variable winds gusting to over 30kph. The fire in compartments 54 and 55 was no longer crowning but at 2105 hours the fire intensified in compartment 43 and crews set up property protection on two homes north of Freemans Road. The fire was about 800 metres from Freemans Road and was moving slowly when at 2112 hours the wind changed and the fire threatened ‘Spring Creek’ homestead. Crews worked to protect the property then at 2239 hours began a backburn on Freemans Road and Mt Carl Road.

Erratic fire behaviour was reported overnight and the fire continued to spread in all directions under variable wind conditions. The main objective of ground crews overnight was property protection.

“THE FIRE MADE A RUN FROM COMPARTMENT 54 NORTH, JUMPING GARLINGS ROAD”

Day 2 – Saturday 13 January 2007

Back burning operations continued on Freemans and Mt Carl Roads in an effort to keep the fire within the affected compartments. At 0700 hours four dozers were re-deployed to Withers Road to work on spot fires. At around 0800 hours the fire made a run from compartment 54 north, jumping Garlings Road. Withers Road was the next holding point but by 0900 hours the fire was behaving erratically and moving north, east and south simultaneously. At this point ground crews established that the fire would not be held at Withers Road and Starkeys Road would be the next fall back line. Crews worked hard to contain spot fires on the eastern edge of the fire but between 1455 hours 1550 hours the fire took another run to the east and threatened properties. Firefighters were re-deployed from the southern edge to assist in property protection and the fire took another run to the north near the corner of Starkeys and Mt Carl Roads at 1629 hours. Within 30 minutes the fire had breached both Starkey’s and Mt Carl Roads and produced spot fire activity up to 200 metres ahead of the fire.

“THE EASTERLY WIND CHANGE ARRIVED WITH A GREAT DEAL OF FORCE AND THE FIRE MADE A MAJOR RUN TO THE WEST ACROSS MENDOORAN ROAD”

Four dozers commenced clearing the old Telstra track that runs parallel to the Mendooran Road in preparation for a predicted easterly wind change. At about 1830 hours the easterly wind change arrived with a great deal of force and the fire made a major run to the west across Mendooran Road. Ground crews



Photo by Rebel Talbert



Photo by Rebel Talbert

Below: 8,400ha area burnt at 2000hrs
Next day: 19,35000ha area burnt at 2000hrs
Eight days later: 26,500ha area burnt at 1900hrs



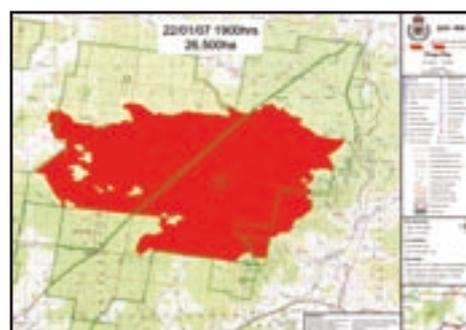
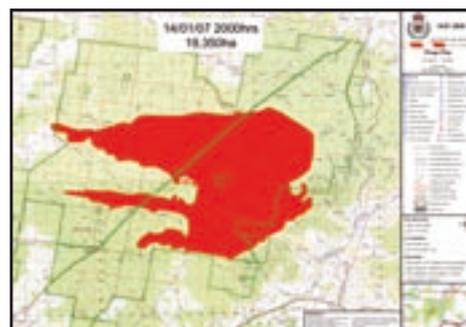
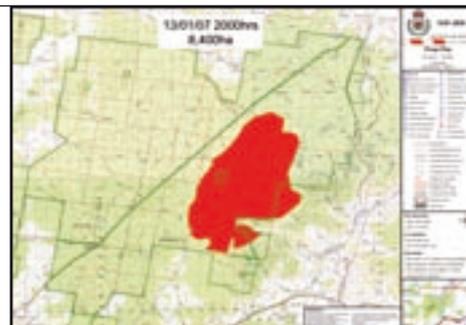
The plume of smoke at 1957hrs.
 Photo by Rebel Talbert



The plume of smoke at 2000hrs.
 Photo by Rebel Talbert



The plume of smoke at 2005hrs.
 Photo by Rebel Talbert



and dozer operators re-located further north on Mendooran Road for safety while the fire moved rapidly to the west.

Two dozer operators who were working to the south of Mendooran Road were unable to re-locate prior to the fire run but had prepared themselves well and survived the fire overrun without incident. All personnel were accounted for and after the major run to the west, the fire had more than doubled in size and the northern finger had travelled in excess of fifteen kilometres. The fire had burnt to the west in a three finger pattern with the main finger between Garlings Road and Denmire Road and the second finger between the north of Frost Road and half way to Garlings Road.

The fire was now over 18,000 hectares with a perimeter of more than 100 kilometres.

The wind did not abate through the night and little work could be undertaken on the active fire edge due to safety concerns. Out of area crews were requested for the following day and firefighting strategies were reconsidered for the next 12 hours.

“THE FIRE CONTINUED TO BURN UNCONTAINED WITH WEATHER CONDITIONS REMAINING UNPREDICTABLE”



Day 3 – Sunday 14 January 2007

Out of area crews from Mudgee and Orange (Strike Team West 21) arrived and continued to work on containment lines on all edges of the fire. The fire continued to burn uncontained with weather conditions remaining unpredictable. Storm cells arrived during mid morning and caused the fire to spot over containment lines regularly. Additional dozers, graders and excavators were deployed to the fire to establish containment lines. Firefighters were deployed for property protection around farms and homes that were under threat and crews were placed with heavy plant to work on blacking out and back burning operations in the southern division.

Containment lines were constructed along the west side of the fire but there were concerns that the fire could make a run in the large unburnt country between the burnt fingers. Firefighters reported large numbers of trees falling due to drought conditions and trees that looked safe were falling unexpectedly and candling due to stress. Firefighters continued to black out and patrol the fire edge and worked with heavy plant to deepen and strengthen containment lines.

Weather conditions continued to put pressure on containment lines but ground crews, heavy plant and aircraft worked to hold the fire behind containment lines and to protect properties from ember attack.

“ADDITIONAL OUT OF AREA CREWS WERE REQUESTED TO ASSIST LOCAL FIREFIGHTERS WITH CONTAINMENT OF THE FIRE”

Day 4 – Monday 15 January 2007

Local crews, strike team West 21 and NPWS crews continued to protect remote properties from the fire and worked with heavy plant to strengthen containment lines. The fire continued to burn in unburnt areas between the fingers of the fire run. Back burning and blacking out operations were carried out on Frost Road and along Freemans Road to tie in the bottom burnt finger and secure the southern boundary for predicted north easterly winds. Additional out of area crews were requested to assist local firefighters with containment of the fire.

Day 5 – Tuesday 16 January 2007

Additional out of area crews from the

Northern Tablelands and task force West 22 arrived and commenced work with NPWS and local crews on the western and south western edges of the fire.

“STORM CELLS CONTINUED TO CREATE ERRATIC FIRE CONDITIONS WITH SPOT FIRES OCCURRING ON THE EAST, WEST AND NORTH BOUNDARIES OF THE FIRE”

The fire continued to burn between the fingers and flare-ups were reported as the day became warmer. Crews continued to black out the edge and worked on hot spots as they emerged. Storm cells continued to create erratic fire conditions with spot fires occurring on the east, west and north boundaries of the fire. All spot fires were contained quickly but backburning on the western boundary was not successfully completed due to humid conditions. Humid conditions continued overnight and crew worked on blacking out and mopping up the 100 km perimeter.

“TREES CONTINUED TO FALL ACROSS TRACKS WITHIN THE GOONOO COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA AND CHAINSAW CREWS WORKED TO RENDER PROBLEM TREES SAFE”

Day 6 to Day 14

Firefighters from the RFS and NPWS worked with aircraft and heavy plant to strengthen and deepen containment lines and on mopping up and blacking out the edge of the fire. Unburnt country within containment lines continued to burn and produced large volumes of smoke. Fallen trees across Mendooran Road were cleared and the road was re-opened to traffic. Trees continued to fall across tracks within the Goonoo Community Conservation Area and chainsaw crews worked to render problem trees safe. Firefighters scaled back operations and worked on hot spots as they developed.

At 1700 hours on Thursday 25 January 2007 the section 44 declaration for Dubbo, Wellington, Warrumbungle's and Gilgandra Local Government Areas was revoked.

AGENCIES INVOLVED

NSW Rural Fire Service
Dubbo City Council
Wellington Council
State Emergency Service
NSW Police
Dept. of Primary Industries
Dept. of Environment and Conservation
NSW Ambulance
Forests NSW
Salvation Army



BYLONG COMPLEX SECTION 44

Story by Matthew Schroder

The afternoon of Wednesday 22 November saw three fires detected in the Cudgong District after lightning strikes passed through the area. The fires were located approximately 6km west of Bylong and 43km north-west of Mudgee. Originally named the Mount Penny and Yarramong Fires, they would later be known as the Bylong Complex Fire.

“LOCAL AND OUT-OF-AREA CREWS WERE SOURCED TO COMBAT THE FIRES”

Over the next five days local and out-of-area crews were sourced to combat the fires. A combination of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters were able to contain the Mount Penny Fire to around one hectare, while crews and bulldozers put in containment lines around the Yarramong fire, which would eventually burn out 6,792 hectares.

More lightning, more fire

Tuesday 28 November again saw the district experiencing lightning strikes, and crews subsequently responding to a number of incidents. Two of these, Mount Frome and Wallaby Rock, were unable to be contained by crews, with Wallaby Rock breaking its containment lines on Wednesday 29 November and forcing crews to commence property protection in the Green Gully-Bocoble Rd area. Conditions in the area on the Wednesday also meant that for safety reasons crews had to be removed from Mount Frome Fire.

Over the following 12 days a combination of ground crew, fixed wing aircraft, helicopters and bulldozers were used to bring the fires under control. The Wallaby Rock fire eventually burnt out 3,710 hectares while the Mount Frome Fire burnt out 186 hectares.



COONABARABRAN SECTION 44

Story by Cameron Wade and Supt. Matt Inwood

“IN THE AREA SURROUNDING COONABARABRAN THERE WERE 11 SEPARATE FIRES”

Major storm activity across the north west of the state on 27 and 28 November saw multiple lightning strikes in the areas around Narrabri and Coonabarabran. In the area surrounding Coonabarabran there were 11 separate fires and some of these were very close to the towns of Coonabarabran and Baradine. The Pilliga forest area was also affected by new fires.

“NEARLY EVERY FIRE TRUCK IN THE SHIRE WAS COMMITTED”

On Wednesday 29 November a Section 44 bushfire emergency was declared for the Warrumbungle local government area. By this stage nearly every fire truck in the shire was committed in some way, with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Forests NSW (FNSW) also making significant commitments to the firefighting effort.

Towns in danger

The priority was to protect the towns of Coonabarabran and Baradine as two separate fires were approaching. Resources

were tasked to work on the edges that were likely to impact on the rural and urban areas of these two towns while the other sides of the fires were patrolled. A Public Liaison Unit was set up utilising council staff managed by RFS personnel. The unit proved invaluable by letting the local communities know what was happening with each fire.

The Timor Rd fire was the one closest to Coonabarabran, at only 2km directly north west of the town. The Pilliga fire had the potential to impact on Baradine 50km north west of Coonabarabran. The fire was about 10km to the east of the town.

Reinforcements arrive

Extra crews from the Far North Coast arrived on Thursday 30 November and began work on Friday assisting local crews with containment work and property protection. NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) crews were also tasked with property protection duties when required. The Newell Highway was closed for several days and was used as the eastern containment line for the Pilliga fire.

“BY THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER THE THREAT HAD EASED TO THE TOWNS”

By Thursday 7 December the threat had eased to the towns and there were only four fires to deal with. These were the Timor Rd fire closest to Coonabarabran, Pilliga 4 closest to Baradine, Tinkrameanah



east of the Newell Hwy in the National Park and Brentwood about 10 km south west of Tambar Springs.

Fires continue to flare

Although the threat had eased, these four fires continued to flare up each afternoon and spotting continued to test containment lines on a daily basis. Operations continued in the very dry conditions for three weeks in total, with the fires finally being declared contained on 13 December.

At this time, the Pilliga 4 fire had burnt out over 92,000 hectares, Timor Rd over 8,500 hectares, Tinkrameanah 3,300 hectares and Brentwood over 10,500 hectares. These fires remained at patrol status until 2 January 2007.



CELEBRATION, COUNTRY STYLE!

Story by Supt. Matt Inwood

"THANK YOU TO SARA FOR COMING OUT AND SHOWING HER SUPPORT"

Country singer Sara Storer put on a concert on the Friday night in the mess hall for all personnel involved in the fires to thank them for their work and efforts in protecting the communities of Coonabarabran and surrounding towns. The concert was well received by all present and a big thank you to Sara for coming out and showing her support of RFS volunteers and other personnel involved in the operation.

On behalf of the Incident Management Team I would like to pass on a well deserved thank you to all volunteers and firefighting personnel involved in the 17 days of the operation who professionally and diligently protected Coonabarabran and the surrounding communities.





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- NSWRFSS • BFCRC • CSIRO • TFS • DEPT. OF LANDS



CORPORATE NEWS

AN HOUR WITH COMMISSIONER PHIL KOPERBERG

Story by Cameron Wade and Belinda Landry

On Sunday 14 January, Commissioner Phil Koperberg officially went on leave from his position to concentrate on his campaign for the State Seat of Blue Mountains. If he is successful, he will become a Member of State Parliament and relinquish the post of Commissioner.

For more than 40 years Commissioner Koperberg has made fighting bushfires his life and work, and that has led to the creation of the NSW Rural Fire Service as we know it today. If he is successful then he will move onto a new stage in his life and career, and the Service likewise will move on to a new stage in its history. Before he left, we spent an hour with the Commissioner to get his thoughts on the RFS, its volunteers, and how it all came to be. The full transcript will soon be available on the volunteer website at www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au.

The beginning

"I recall fighting a bushfire in 1959 on the South Coast, where I grew up. Fires were ravaging through Bulli – there was no organised firefighting there at all and so the fire was being run by the local police officer. A few of my mates and I sort of joined up and we did a couple of days of firefighting. We'd had no training, and we wore our jeans, and whatever we could find to put on our feet. Fire destroyed a lot of property there in that particular summer but that was it – it was a very short lived experience.

In 1967 we moved to the Blue Mountains, on Hawkesbury Rd. We had barely even unpacked when someone knocked on the door and asked me to join North Springwood Brigade as a new resident. A few weeks later I did decide that I would wander down to their shed – and that's all it was, a Brigade shed, a little 10 metres by 5 metres brick shed in which was housed an old 1942 Chev Canada

Blitz – and I met a crew, including a man who used to, in some ways, be my mentor in my understanding of fire, Frank Martin. And so I joined up. I enjoyed working with them – they were a wonderful group of well intentioned and quite smart and dedicated people, who were doing a hell of a lot with very little – as I said, a 1942 Chev Canada Blitz.

Brigade life

It was common practice for the Brigade to meet on Saturday afternoons. Activity on Saturday comprised of two things: either trying to keep the old Blitz on the road by taking the head off or dropping the sump, or going down and doing some fire trail maintenance. There was basically a network of local fire trails that were predominantly in National Parks – the National Parks and Wildlife Service didn't exist then – but nevertheless, the National Park up there was run by a trust, and everybody pitched in and did a bit.

Another part of the Brigade's activity, which was as much learning bushcraft as anything else, was to go down on Saturday afternoons and repair fire trails, clear fire trails and build culverts and drains and so on and so forth, and that's where I got my understanding of what the role of fire was in the Australian environment.

The following year I was elected as the Deputy Captain of the Brigade after only seven or eight months in the Brigade, which was very flattering.

Memorable moment

So then of course came the 1968 fires which so devastated the Blue Mountains and there was certainly for me, as I'm sure there was for many other people, a road to Damascus experience. On 28 November, 1968, when fires took many lives and destroyed much property, three of our volunteer firefighters – three of my mates – died fighting the fire.

Two members of the Warrimoo Brigade and the Captain of the Falconbridge Brigade perished at White Cross, which is a little

area at North Springwood (now Winmalee). They were on a fire trail, doing some reconnaissance jobs, and it was a very hot, dry day – typical of a "blow up day" – and the wind changed. They became entrapped, and they lost their lives.

There was an incredible and overwhelming sense of disbelief and loss that afternoon, and the skies were black with smoke. Even at three in the afternoon it was like dusk, and that only added to the feeling of hopelessness, because there was disbelief that three people that everyone knew from our community had perished in this fire. We thought we were doing ok. But when you compare it to today there was no formal training, there was no science – there really wasn't even personal protective equipment. You brought your own overalls, elastic sided boots, and if you were lucky you got a pair of gloves or something. And there was no air support. It was very, very basic. And that was the old bushfire brigades.

How the "RFS" was born

1994 was the watershed year. There was so much widespread fire across NSW, and so many losses universally across the state – particularly across the Sydney landscape. While those catastrophic fires were fought hard, and fought very well, the losses were just tremendous.

That led to one of Australia's longest ever coronial inquiries, by the then Senior Deputy Coroner, John Hyatt. I don't necessarily agree with everything he recommended or said, but I did respect his jurisdiction, and the thoroughness of his inquiry. Afterwards, Hyatt recommended that lack of cohesion was one of the areas which ought to be addressed, and he was quite critical of the fact that there were 142 separate bushfire services.

While he went further and recommended the possibility of the amalgamation of the urban firefighting organisation with the rural firefighting organisation, he did point out that the organisation ought not to continue under the auspices of local government. He



**NSW RURAL
FIRE SERVICE
COMMISSIONER
PHIL KOPERBERG**



wasn't being critical of local government, but having 142 policies permeate the management of an emergency service was deemed by him to be quite silly.

So we grasped that opportunity. And I recall very vividly – and this is not something that anyone up to this point in time knows – that that afternoon, the Senior Deputy State Coroner handed down his findings that a single organisation be formed. I was present with a number of ministers and the Premier of the day. The findings – or some aspects of them – had obviously been made to the government, but this was the public release of them, and in the flurry of everything that was happening someone high in government said to me, "What are we going to call this organisation?" and I said, "The Rural Fire Service."

On the volunteers

The RFS is now an organisation of which the NSW community is and ought to be enormously proud, because it is an organisation which is second to none. I think it's the best in the world. We're not without our problems – not everyone agrees with its somewhat rapid evolution, not all of our volunteers necessarily agree with the direction we've taken the Service in. But the important thing is, it's capable of delivering more efficiency, expertise, technology and skills than it ever had before.

We've stayed stable at around 70,000 volunteers for as long as I can remember, with a slight increase in some areas, slight decrease in others. And of that 70,000, maybe 2-3% – if that much – would not be entirely

happy with the direction we've gone in. If I've ever – in the hundreds and hundreds of interviews that I've done – failed to mention the volunteers, then they would be very rare occasions. I guess it's been an underlying objective of mine to have people in bushfire prone areas, whether it be in Victoria or Queensland or New South Wales, understand that this vast army of very skilled people on whom they rely and to some extent take for granted, are in fact volunteers – carpenters, lawyers, bricklayers, service station owners, accountants, clerks, cashiers, doctors, judges, and politicians. But they are volunteers, and they have three lives – the RFS life, their personal life, and their professional life. With a little bit of bias, I sometimes say they have become so good at what they are doing that they are often confused for being salaried firefighters – or as some would call them, 'professional firefighters'. My definition of professional doesn't necessarily accord with the differentiation of paid and unpaid. These people – in the vast majority of cases – would have to be seen as very professional in their execution of firefighting duties.

The fact that the RFS is now a household name is something in which I take more pride than anything else, because these volunteers are now recognised for what they do. And they bring with them emerging technology, passion, competency, skill and commitment.

On the future

I'll definitely miss the RFS. I miss it terribly already. It's no secret that I wake up each



morning with a knot in my stomach. But I've gone as far as I can go here in terms of doing what I at least believe to be something which has to happen to ensure that the volunteer system of bushfire management – which goes further than just bush firefighting – can continue to flourish. And I can't do anything more to do that. I've been 21 years in this job, 38 years in the industry and I am 63 years of age – not that I regard that as a barrier – but there are bigger things to be done elsewhere.

If I can make a contribution to that in the NSW legislature, in whatever capacity might be deemed to be appropriate, that has to be the next step. Because while the battle might have been won, the war hasn't.

We have to ensure that the system we have, whilst it has to continue to improve, whilst it has to have directional change from time to time, according to social, economic, and other expectations, stays on course. It must be the dominant feature in protecting people from bushfires. And I think we can do that."



MEET THE ACTING COMMISSIONER - ROB ROGERS

The Service has seen a baton change at the top as a result of Commissioner Phil Koperberg going on leave to contest the State Seat of Blue Mountains. If he is successful he will relinquish his position as Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service.

Rob Rogers, formerly Assistant Commissioner and Executive Director Community Safety, has been appointed by Minister Kelly to act in the top job.

Stepping into big shoes

"The Service has had only one man in charge for over 20 years. Phil has done an outstanding job and to be asked to step into the shoes of someone like him is an honour but also a daunting task," Rob said.

"After all, for more than 40 years Phil has made firefighting his life and work, and that has led to the creation of the NSW Rural Fire Service as we know it today. A terrific achievement by any measure," he added.

A Sydney beginning

For those of you who are unfamiliar with Rob's background, he joined Belrose Brigade in the Warringah Shire in 1979 at the age of 15, where he remained until 1995.

In reflecting on his earlier years in the Service he said "it provided me with much needed

discipline at the time and I also enjoyed an unprecedented sense of belonging."

"My first encounter with fire was being placed on a hose and being left on my own to protect properties in St Ives, wearing borrowed overalls. Times have changed, and in my view very much for the better."

He attended many out-of-area fires including some in the Blue Mountains, Nowra and Wollongong. As a volunteer Rob held the positions of Deputy Captain, Training Officer and Captain.

Learning from others

"I LEARNT A LOT FROM THE TAREE VOLUNTEERS"

In 1995 he was appointed DFCO in Taree and was later FCO.

"Looking back now I realise that I learnt a lot from the Taree volunteers. As a young officer you do make mistakes along the way. The knack is to learn from that experience and I certainly did. I would like to think that they also learnt a little from me."

In 1998 he was appointed as FCO in Cessnock.

"Cessnock provided me with yet another excellent learning opportunity and I was lucky enough to have extremely competent and effective volunteers who were dealing with regular fire activity. The Hunter has such diverse countryside and a mix of industry. There was never a dull moment."

The position also provided him with invaluable knowledge of issues affecting rural areas and an experience of managing a district outside of Sydney.

He joined Head Office as Director Regional Management in 2002, and shortly after became the Executive Director Community Safety. Some of his achievements included reforming auditing of multi-agency risk management plans, enforcing necessary hazard reduction on both public and private lands and approving development applications in areas classified as being fire prone. Rob was also instrumental in the process of integrating community education and engagement into all aspects of fire risk mitigation rather than having it as a stand alone program.

"WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY"

Rob's experience to date leaves him feeling very proud and passionate about the Service.

"We are all very different people with differing ideas, but all make significant contributions to the Service. But no matter what those differences are, we all share a common goal – we dedicate ourselves to the protection of life and property not only in our own communities but also across the state. We have more that unites us than divides us and this is an ethos that I am proud to share."



ENGINE ONE ALPHA OVERVIEW

Story by Matthew Schroder

The next prototype for the Category 1 tankers has been rolled out of the warehouse and, if you hadn't already guessed, it's called Engine One Alpha (1A).

The new prototype has a number of different features that are being trialled and reworked, with Engine 1A already scheduled to go back and have some more modifications.

Better protection for crew

Engine 1A has a ring-main based cab protection spray system and a modified wheel spray system. This is designed to provide better protection to both the wheels and to the crew cabin. Inside the cab there are cab window curtains to deflect radiant heat. These developments came out of the findings of the CSIRO Fire Vehicle Crew Protection System Research Project, such as Mogo.

"THE NEW PROTOTYPE HAS A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT FEATURES THAT ARE BEING TRIALLED AND REWORKED"

Access made easier

Access to the cab has been made easier with the installation of an extra step below the rear doors of the cab as well as the modification of the access handles.

New plumbing system

A new plumbing system has been designed to remove the 80nb "L" port valve and improve the hydraulic efficiency of the plumbing. The plumbing on Engine 1A includes butterfly valves and butt weld pipe fittings on the suction side as well as the fitting of strainers within the external Storz inlets and the deletion of the "Y" strainer.

LED lights have been fitted to the appliance as grille lights, front alley lights, rear red and blue lights, rear tail lights plus locker and equipment box lights.

"THE LID LAYOUT HAS BEEN RECONFIGURED"

A larger control box has been fitted in the centre of the cab to allow for the fitting of radios within the box and improve the layout of controls and wiring. The lid layout has been reconfigured to allow for radio remote heads and GPS units to fit on the lid.



The fairleads on the live hose reels have been inverted to assess the benefits of guiding the hose on the hose reel at a lower height.

A low water level indicator has been fitted with a flashing red LED in the control box of the cab.

To aid in grass fire fighting and some structural and MVA firefighting a fixed monitor bracket has been fixed to the right hand side of the crew refuge bay. It has been linked into the plumbing and a monitor bracket is supplied with the truck.

If you would like to see Engine 1A contact your local Fire Control Centre and they will liaise with Engineering Services to see if a visit is possible.

To provide feedback on Engine 1 Alpha you can email engineering@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

INS AND OUTS OF ENGINE ONE ALPHA

Story by Matthew Schroder

Terry Brownlow of the Service's Engineering Services Section sat down for a brief Q&A on Engine One Alpha.

1. How long did the development of Engine 1A take?

Engine 1A is basically a standard Cat 1 tanker with 20 concept changes. The cab fire over-run protection systems took the longest - about 7 years. It started in 1999 with the CSIRO testing spray nozzle performances for the RFS and grew into the CSIRO Spray Protection Research Program that included collaboration between the RFS, CFA and others, the building of the Mogo test facility and a number of years of vehicle fire over-run testing.

The development of the sub-frame took about 2.5 years, beginning early in 2004 as the result of cracks occurring in the Isuzu FTS chassis and culminating in the fabrication and fitting of the sub-frame to the Engine 1A chassis in July 2006.

The development of other items began early in 2006 with the tanker being completed in November.

2. How did the modifications come about? Who did you canvass for suggestions?

The idea is to trial and evaluate a number of concepts, and to get feedback from the end users, before promoting some or all these concepts as changes to the current tankers.

There was no one person or group specifically canvassed. Some of the prototype items are the result of feedback and requests from the Technical Committee, others from discussions with district staff, RFSAs and volunteers and some from internal and external research.

3. Which regional exercises is the Engine going to?

Our plan is to attend all four Regional Exercises plus the 4 Tanker Workshops planned for 2007.

4. Is there going to be an Engine One Bravo?

We are negotiating with a district that is getting a Hino Cat 1 this year, to build some changes into their tanker and to have the tanker available for evaluation and display as Engine One Bravo.

Subject to negotiation with the District, final cost etc, the changes being proposed will include most of the changes on Engine One Alpha plus a Hino Chassis, different LEDs, different make of curtains, tyre protection sprays for grass fires, full width tray in the top of the front loading board (same as the earlier Cat 2s), digital pressure readout in cabin instead of the current pump engine tachometer, hydraulic drives to both hose reels, strainer in water tank overhead filler neck, different water level indicator (five lights plus audible alarm at 1/4 tank).

Thank you to Terry Brownlow for this interview.



MYRFS MAPS

Story by James Williams.

Topographic Maps are now available in the latest release of maps on MyRFS. The collection of 1120 maps can be downloaded by volunteers registered on the MyRFS volunteer website.

"THE COLLECTION OF 1120 MAPS CAN BE DOWNLOADED BY VOLUNTEERS"

The topographic maps in the current release are based on map data provided from NSW Department of Lands. The maps can be printed up to A0 size.

"These maps are part of an ongoing suite of map products being rolled-out by GIS for MyRFS," explains James Williams, Project Manager for MyRFS.

Feedback makes a difference

The release comes after a release of Brigade Boundary maps earlier in the year, which provided a range of feedback to the GIS Services unit.

"We knew some of the information in the Brigade Boundary maps may not have been 100% accurate," explains Stewart Hay, GIS Manager.

"But what better way to get the information up to date than asking our volunteers to take a look," he added.

Volunteer feedback on the maps has resulted in improvements being made to both the brigade stations and boundaries data.

Meeting a need

Maps frequently came up as a need in the volunteer reference groups during the needs-analysis phase of MyRFS, and also in feedback received via the MyRFS website.

The GIS Services unit plans to provide Satellite imagery and other map information through MyRFS in upcoming releases. The objective is to create and maintain a growing library of maps that would be accessible by all RFS volunteers.

"MAPS FREQUENTLY CAME UP AS A NEED IN THE VOLUNTEER REFERENCE GROUPS"

The capabilities of MyRFS maps will be on display at Regional Exercises state-wide later in the year.

Service volunteers can self-register on the MyRFS website at www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au

OUR ANNUAL REPORT – INFORMATION CENTRAL

Story by Michael Watts

Like all other government agencies the RFS has to submit a report annually to Parliament stating its yearly performance and future goals – the Annual Report (AR).

“THE AR IS A ‘ONE-STOP’ SHOP FOR KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERVICE”

Annual reports cover the twelve months from 1 July to 30 June in the following calendar year. They are available free of charge to the general public in hard copy or through the various agency websites. The AR is a ‘one-stop’ shop for key information about the Service but that information has to be consistent with that supplied to the government in the Service’s Results and Services Plan (RSP).

What goes into the Annual Report?

“ARS SHOULD HIGHLIGHT THE FAILURES IN PERFORMANCE AS WELL AS THE SUCCESSES”

Deciding what is included in the AR is not difficult as the essential content is identified in the *Annual Reports (Departments) Act*

OUTCOMES OF THE 2005 VOLUNTEER SURVEY: HOW ARE WE GOING SO FAR?

Story by Mariell Taylor

In 2005 the RFS undertook a state-wide survey of volunteers through the Bushfire Bulletin and online through the Service’s internet site. In total, 3,238 surveys were completed, of which 521 (16.6%) were from Region North, 527 (16.3%) from Region South, 1670 (51.6%) from Region East, and 238 (7.4%) from Region West (the remainder of surveys returned did not specify a region or returned an unidentified response).

“A BI-ANNUAL SNAPSHOT OF ISSUES AFFECTING VOLUNTEERS”

The Volunteer Survey was developed to be a bi-annual snapshot of issues affecting volunteers in order to assist planning across the Service. Over the past 18 months, the Strategic Development Directorate, along with Volunteer Relations, has worked with Executive Directors to help them identify candidate programs to be incorporated into the annual review of the Corporate Plan.



1985. The Service is required to include information about its performance – what we said we would do, what we actually did, how we measured our performance and the reasons why (and if) we did not meet our commitments. The financial section of the AR sets out ‘a true and fair view’ of the Service’s financial position as at 30 June. The Auditor-General has made it abundantly clear that ARs should highlight the failures in performance as well as the successes. We are also required to identify our goals for the following twelve months.

We are firefighters

Primarily, the 2005 respondents viewed themselves as firefighters. This supports the idea that our volunteers are our frontline, and certainly our most valuable asset. The majority of responses also stated that they joined the Service in order to assist the community or help when a bushfire affected their local area. The 2005 survey results identified that the Service has a considerable pool of experienced members on which it can draw, but has a need to find sufficient replacements for this experience over the next 5 to 10 years. This has highlighted the need for research and development in recruitment and retention strategies for volunteers between the ages of 25 and 45 years of age. Interim solutions have been made through the integration of recruitment into RFS Open Days and the development of ‘Volunteer to Career’ strategies in 2007.

The role of volunteers in Section 44 Incident Management Teams (IMTs) was also investigated in 2005 and further research will be undertaken in this area in the next survey to ascertain whether this heightened level of volunteer involvement has been successful.

“GREATER EMPHASIS IS NOW BEING PLACED ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE”

Apart from the ‘essentials’, much more information needs to be included. Until relatively recently the AR was a report on Service activity but greater emphasis is now being placed on accountability and performance. This gives the government and the tax payers of New South Wales an opportunity to determine whether or not they are getting value for money and whether or not the Service is meeting community expectations.

How is it written?

Sourcing, gathering and collating the appropriate information and data to include in the AR begins in April each year when the Service’s managers are requested to start preparing key information on their region’s/section’s performance for inclusion in the AR. Quotes for design and printing are obtained at this time.

This chase for information continues, with constant changes being made, up to and including the preparation of the first draft in August. There are usually three or four drafts as revision follows revision, before the final draft is approved and the Commissioner’s Foreword added.

In late September the final version is sent for printing and submission to the Minister for presentation to Parliament.

A new survey for a new time

As with many surveys, the 2005 Volunteer Survey was merely a snapshot of the issues at that particular point in time. In many ways it identified areas where further research and analysis was required. So a follow up survey is planned for 2007. In the 2007 survey, you will undoubtedly notice there are some questions that are similar to the 2005 survey. This is so that we are able to collect data for compilation for trend analysis. A large majority of questions in the 2007 survey will, however, be new.

“THE 2007 VOLUNTEER SURVEY WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR”

The 2007 Volunteer Survey will be undertaken in the second half of this year. Look out for more details in the next edition of the Bushfire Bulletin.

More information on the 2005 Volunteer Survey can be found on the RFS website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

Corporate Planning and Performance staff members with their award.



AWARD WINNING PERFORMANCE!

Story and photos by Carolyn Cuello

Corporate Planning and Performance have been recognised by the Treasury Managed Fund Risk Management Association, receiving an award for their work on the electronic Service Delivery Model (e-SDM).

“IDENTIFYING, RECOGNISING AND CELEBRATING LEADING RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICE”

Suncorp Risk Services, the provider of strategic risk management services to the NSW Treasury Managed Fund, hosted the program with the aim of identifying, recognising and celebrating leading risk management practice within the NSW public sector.

This prestigious award was given in recognition of 'Leading Practice in the Application of the Risk Management Process', thus setting a benchmark to other government organisations.

The awards function, held at the Westin Hotel in Sydney, was attended by all current members of the unit involved with the stages of the awards program and the all important planning and implementation.

What the award involves

Stage 1 of the awards program required submitting a technical review based on the essential category criteria, these being Leadership; Strategic Planning and Implementation; Data, Measurement and Corporate Knowledge; People, Risk Assessment and Management Tools; and



Results, with Stage 2 being a presentation and further explanation of the submission to a panel consisting of public sector peers, industry experts and academics.

Now in its 3rd year in District land and more recently with the creation of a version suited to Region, the next phase is to develop a more sustainable web based edition (to be implemented 2008) as well as one that is Headquarters specific.

The Corporate Planning and Performance team accepted the award and acknowledge the support and contribution of District staff, Business Application Development and Incheck Systems, our Senior Managers and Regional staff.



VALE
CHRISTOPHER JOHN LORD
02.09.40 - 16.02.07

“CHRIS EITHER IMPLEMENTED OR HAD BEEN PART OF MANY OF THE INITIATIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION”

Chris was a passionate supporter and driver of the NSW Rural Fire Service Association serving on the Executive for five years before holding the office of President in 2005/06 and 2006/07. He was very proud that the Association had a close working relationship with the Service.

Chris either implemented or had been part of many of the initiatives of the Association. Two of the most important initiatives were the Volunteer Charter - an agreement between the NSW Rural Fire Service Association, the NSW State Government and the NSW Rural Fire Service, which ensure that the Government and the Service will commit to consultation with volunteers on all matters which may directly impact upon them.

“HE WAS A STRAIGHT SHOOTER WHO WAS NEVER AFRAID TO SAY THAT HE WAS WRONG”

Chris can be described as being measured, humble, caring and above all, honest. He was a straight shooter who was never afraid to say that he was wrong. He was also a visionary with regards to the Association and how 'things' could be done better.

Chris will be sorely missed, but not forgotten.

Chief Executive Officer, Ken Harris
On behalf of the members of the
NSW Rural Fire Service Association



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Item	Price	Qty	Colour	Size	Total
Polo Shirt - Double stitched Polyester/Cotton with pocket & Australian made	XS-XXL 3XL-7XL (L)emon/(N)avy/(W)hite XS, 6XL-7XL (N)avy only				\$29.00 \$31.00
T-Shirt - Double stitched 100% Cotton & Australian made	S-XXL 3XL-6XL (N)avy/(W)hite 6XL (N)avy only				\$18.75 \$20.75
Polar Fleecy Jumper - Half zip front with 2 slant pockets at bottom	XS-3XL (N)avy only				\$42.50
Polar Fleecy Jacket - Full zip front, Elasticated cuff, Draw cord waist	S-XXL (N)avy only				\$52.50
Sloppy Joe - Super fleecy / Low pill with round neck & Australian made	S-XXL 3XL-6XL (N)avy only (N)avy only				\$29.00 \$31.00
Dress Jumper - 80/20 Wool/Polyester blend, Shoulder & Elbow Patches, Epaulettes, Pencil pockets & Australian made	S-XXL 3XL-5XL (N)avy only (N)avy only				\$85.00 \$87.00
Beanie - Acrylic - One size fits all - Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only				\$11.00
Beanie - Fleecy - One size fits all - Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only				\$13.50
Cap - Baseball - Brushed cotton, Adjustable velcro, One size fits all, Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only				1-24 \$8.50 / 25-99 \$8.00 / 100+ \$7.50
Medium Kit Bag - Heavy duty nylon & zips, Base board, 3 external zipped pockets with shoulder & hand carry straps	L 50cm x H 30cm x W 20cm				\$35.00
Large Kit Bag - Heavy duty nylon & zips, Base board, 5 external zipped pockets including "Wet" & Boot pockets with shoulder & hand carry straps	L 73cm x H 33cm x W 31cm				\$45.00
Garment Sizes	XS 85 S 90 M 95 L 100 XL 105 XXL 110 3XL 115 4XL 120 5XL 125 6XL 130 7XL 135				Postage & Handling per shipping address (Includes badges if part of order)
					\$8.00
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Please print Name and / or Brigade for embroidering on garments and kit bags. Name or Brigade \$5.00 or Name and Brigade \$8.00	Type (Please Tick)			Total
	Name	Brigade	Both	

*Red on Gold badges are Proban backed

Sew on embroidered Name or Brigade badges - 9cm x 3cm	Colour (Please Tick)			Qty	Total
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1-99 Badges \$3.30 / 100+ Badges \$3.00 Please note there is NO MINIMUM order For larger orders - please print clearly on extra paper					Postage & Handling per shipping address (Not required if included with garment order)
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Total					

Please debit my credit card for \$ _____ Including postage and packaging Please Tick Bankcard <input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> Card No. _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ Credit Card Expiry Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Name on card: _____ Signature: _____ Please print Name & Address clearly Name: _____ Address: _____ _____ Postcode: _____ Contact Telephone: _____	<p>ALL PRICES INCLUDE GST</p> <p>Please make all cheques/money orders payable to: Blue Mountains D.M.P. Enterprises Pty. Ltd. ABN 44 092 928 919</p> <p>Phone:(02) 4739 8619 Fax: (02) 4739 5417</p> <p>Visit us on the internet at: www.dmp.net.au email: sales@dmp.net.au</p> <p>Send all mail orders to: Blue Mountains D.M.P. Enterprises Pty. Ltd. 27 Byrne St, Lapstone NSW 2773</p>
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AVIATION OPERATIONS AND AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION

Aviation Operations

Aviation operations have proven to be a significant factor in effective initial attack and when properly integrated into the fire suppression strategies, provide a very efficient resource. Tactical aircraft may be rotary or fixed wing and can be used for a variety of tasks, including transport, reconnaissance, fire scanning, fire plotting, dropping water, foam or retardant, aerial incendiary work, forward looking infrared (FLIR) detection and winching.

To identify the various classes of tactical aircraft the RFS has allocated callsign prefixes as follows:

- Firebird Light Helicopter
- Helitak Medium/Heavy Helicopter
- Bomber Fixed Wing Bomber
- Firespotter Fixed Wing Reconnaissance Aircraft
- Firescan Fixed Wing Remote Sensing Aircraft

Each aircraft is also allocated a three digit number, the first numeral of which identifies the State of origin (NSW=2 and VIC=3) e.g. Helitak 221. This callsign number will be visible on the fuselage from the ground.

Under no circumstances are personnel to be taken for joy flights or be included on any flight unless essential to the accomplishment of the task.

It should be noted that the Federal Government, through the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), sets the standards for the aviation industry, including safety, licensing requirements and minimum standards for equipment. The Australian Search and Rescue (AusSAR), based in Canberra, is the Federal Government Authority responsible for the coordination of all aviation search and rescue operations around Australia.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is responsible for investigating aircraft crashes, accidents and incidents. The NSW Government, through the fire authorities and the aviation contractors, is responsible for the development and fostering of safe practices under the Civil Aviation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Air Base Selection and Terminology

Helipad is a helicopter landing spot for dropping off and picking up only, has no infrastructure and fuel is not available unless specifically requested.

Level 1 Airbase is a fire line airbase for forward deployment with minor infrastructure and limited refuelling.

Level 2 Airbase is a tactical airbase with adequate specialist personnel for mid size operations and has full flight following of aircraft, ground support facilities including re-fuelling plus water, foam and/or retardant filling sites.

Level 3 Airbase is located at a local airport with a sealed or maintained runway and has all the required infrastructure.

Radio Communications with Aircraft

By law, the pilot is in command of the aircraft and therefore communications equipment in the aircraft shall only be used with the pilot's approval.

Efficient communications planning to provide flexible and high quality radio communications as a continuous means of contact with all aircraft in operations is essential for the safe and efficient operation of aircraft.

Aviation operations will utilise a variety of communications means including the Strategic Radio Network, Government Radio Network (GRN), Private Mobile Radio (PMR), Fire Agency Networks and dedicated VHF Airband frequencies. All aircraft used by the RFS have two aviation VHF AM Airband radios, one RFS GRN/PMR, one VHF FM mid band radio (for NPWS, Forests NSW, Sydney Catchment Authority and ACT), a CDMA telephone and some also have a UHF CB 40 channel radio.

Fire detection reconnaissance flights – communication is via Regional Strategic GRN then District/Team/Zone GRN/PMR for reporting fire details.

Flight following to or from an incident keeps track of the progress of a flight through contact at regular pre-determined

time intervals and a search and rescue (SAR) is initiated if contact is not maintained or there is some doubt as to the safety of the aircraft. Communication is via the State Operations Customer Service Centre on GRN State Operations frequency 166.

Small incident with one or two aircraft

– tactical aircraft may be allocated in direct support of ground resources, in which case reliable communications, generally on the local GRN/PMR frequency must be established with the appropriate ground commander (OIC, Sector or Divisional Commander).

Larger incident with two or more aircraft

– the tactical direction is given to the aircraft by the Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) usually on an Airband frequency and this same frequency is used for the transmission of information with the Airbase and the Incident Management Team. Communication with the fireground is usually between the AAS and the appropriate ground commander using the local GRN/PMR frequency.

On occasions the aircraft and the AAS will work independently of ground units.

Airband frequencies will be allocated by the State Air Desk (SAD), once the aircraft have been tasked and the allocation will remain active until the incident is terminated and all aircraft have been stood down.

Emergency

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday is the international distress message used to indicate that the aircraft or people on board the aircraft are exposed to a life threatening danger (e.g. engine on fire).

Pan Pan, Pan Pan, Pan Pan is the message used to indicate that the aircraft or people on board the aircraft may, in the near future, be exposed to a life threatening danger (e.g. running out of fuel).

If Mayday or Pan Pan is heard, all other communications shall cease until the situation is managed and the life protected. Other users may be requested to provide communications to assist with the emergency. All other users shall maintain a listening watch only.



AVIATION OPERATIONS AND AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION

FIREBIRD (LIGHT HELICOPTERS)



Squirrel AS350 with one engine and 3 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 170 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 224kph and carries 680 litres.

HELITAK (MEDIUM HELICOPTERS)



Kawasaki BK117 with twin engines and four blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 300 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 260kph and carries 1,100 litres.

HELITAK (MEDIUM HELICOPTERS)



Bell 204 Restricted Category, with one engine and two blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 320 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 200kph and carries 1,500 litres.

LONG LINE



Kaman K-Max with a long line bucket.

BOMBER (FIXED WING AIRCRAFT)



Turbine Dromader uses AVGAS fuel at the rate of 250 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 240kph and carries 2,500 litres.



Bell 206L Long Ranger with one engine and 2 blades uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 170 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 220kph and carries 680 litres.



Bell 212 with twin engines and 2 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 360 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 190kph and with belly-tank carries 1,300 litres.



Bell 214B with single engine and 2 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 600 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 260kph and with belly-tank carries 2,700 litres.



Radial Dromader, uses AVGAS fuel at the rate of 180 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 200kph and carries 3,000 litres.



Bell 206 Jet Ranger with one engine and 2 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 105 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 214kph and carries 455 litres.



Eurocopter EC145 with twin engines and four blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 300 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 268kph and carries 1,100 litres.



Kaman K-Max with single engine driving two side by side intermeshing, counter rotating blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 253 litres per hour, has a maximum speed of 185kph and carries 3,000 litres.



HELITAK (HEAVY HELICOPTERS)

Sikorsky CH54B Sky Crane with twin engines and 6 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 2,080 litres per hour, has a maximum speed of 213kph and carries 9,000 litres.



Air Tractor AT 802 uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 280 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 280kph and carries 3,200 litres.



Eurocopter BO105 with twin engines and 4 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 250 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 204kph and carries 800 litres.



Bell 412 with twin engines and 4 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 380 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 230kph and with belly-tank carries 1,420 litres.



SHORT LINE

Bell 212 with a short line bucket



Erickson Air Crane S64 Series E (Isabelle) with twin engines and 6 blades, uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 2,080 litres per hour, has a max speed of 213kph and carries 9,000 litres.



Ayres Thrush SR2 G10 uses Jet A1 fuel at the rate of 200 litres per hour, has a cruising speed of 240kph and carries 2,000 litres.

FIRESPOTTER (RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT)

Various types of aircraft are used for reconnaissance including the Cessna 182, which uses AVGAS fuel at the rate of 55 litres per hour with a cruising speed of 240kph and the twin engine Vulcan

Air Partenavia P68 which also uses AVGAS fuel at the rate of 80 litres per hour with a cruising speed of 295kph.

AIRCRAFT WATER BOMBING SAFETY

WARNING: Never allow a situation to develop where the safety of a ground crew is dependent on aircraft/water bombing support. Factors outside your control could prevent continuing aircraft support. Be alert, watch and listen for low flying aircraft and communicate with the Aircraft or Air Attack Supervisor in accordance with the communications plan.



The Air Attack supervisor will warn ground crews of imminent danger, erratic weather, spot fires and the approach of firebombing aircraft.

Provide the Aircraft or Air Attack Supervisor with any changed locations of ground crews, any flight hazards, wind conditions, unsafe aircraft operation and adverse effects of aircraft vortex.

A graphic with a yellow and black diagonal striped border. At the top, a black box contains the text "Fire Bombing Safety" in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, a list of bullet points provides safety instructions. A note states "Note: Not all aircraft are siren equipped." and a section titled "If caught in an aircraft drop zone" lists further safety actions.

- Monitor your PMR/GRN radio
- Listen for your Vehicle-Aircraft Safety Callsign
- Identify the aircraft Tactical Callsign
- Await instructions from the Air Attack Supervisor or bombing pilot
- Move clear and remain clear of the drop zone until directed otherwise
- Move clear of the area on hearing an aircraft activate its siren
- Resume firefighting as soon as drops are completed

Note: Not all aircraft are siren equipped.

If caught in an aircraft drop zone

- Move away from the fire line or return to your vehicle
- Do not run or panic
- Watch out for falling branches or debris
- Place hand tools well clear of you
- Secure your helmet with your arms to protect your head
- Watch your footing, foams and retardants can make the ground slippery
- If hit by foam or retardant, wash off with cold water

AVIATION SPECIALIST ROLES



- **Air Operations Manager (AOM)** enables persons with existing Air Attack Supervisor and Group Leader competencies to manage air operations at a large bush fire.



- **Aircraft Officer (AOF)** enables persons to coordinate aircraft operations at a small to medium bush fire or to assist an AOM at a large complex incident.



- **Air Base Manager (ABM)** enables persons to manage a base for air operations at a bush fire.



- **Air Base Operator (ABO)** enables persons to operate bush fire aviation support equipment at an air base.

- **Aircraft Radio Operator (ARO)** (recognised by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority) enables RFS personnel to operate an aviation radio.
- **Air Attack Supervisor (AAS)** enables a person, with existing appreciation of bush fire behaviour, suppression and air observation skills, to supervise the aerial suppression (air attack) of bush fires from an aircraft. Generally activated when two or more aircraft are operating on the same fire.
- **Air Observer (AOB)** enables persons to carry out visual reconnaissance of bush fires from an aircraft.
- **Aerial Systems Operator (ASO)** (an internal aviation specialist programme) enabling the operation of airborne systems, such as line scanning equipment, digital imaging or FLIR, in an aircraft.
- **Aerial Incendiary Bombardier (AIB)** enables persons to operate aerial incendiary equipment in an aircraft.
- **Aerial Incendiary Navigator (AIN)** enables persons to navigate aircraft on incendiary dropping missions.



- **Air Base Safety Advisor (SA)** Although safety is the responsibility of all persons at an incident, the safety advisor works within the chain of command and has the delegated authority of the Incident Controller to stop or change any order, action or condition only where any person's life is at immediate risk.

Note: all roles are generally an internal aviation specialist skill, aligned with national units of competency, unless otherwise noted.

Photos taken by various members of the Aviation Group.

Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth AFSM,
Manager Operations, Policy and Standards.

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GENERAL NEWS



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE RFS

Operation Farmers' Child got a great boost with thousands of dollars in goods and cash making their way to the families of drought-affected farmers in time for Christmas.

The toy donation program was the idea of RFS Chaplain Ron Anderson's daughter, Lisa Senior. When she is not a practicing lawyer, Lisa heads up a large youth group in the Salvation Army.

The group came up with the idea of helping families in drought affected NSW who may not have had enough cash to buy Christmas presents.

Over a thousand gifts given

RFS members donated \$5,213.50 which helped to purchase 1,428 gifts. Due to the amount of monetary donations received, and as a means of further supporting suffering country communities, gifts were purchased by RFS rural Chaplains from locally owned country stores.

Not all funds were used entirely for the purchase of gifts. Where it was identified there was a particular need for a family, such as medication, the donation itself was given.

Help from 'city cousins'

"It gives the people of the bush fresh encouragement and hope to receive gifts and assistance from their city cousins in times like these," said Ron Anderson.

"So many of the farming fraternity have suffered yet another crop failure and have had to sell off valuable livestock early because of the exceptional conditions across most of the State.

"THEY WILL BE GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY WHAT WE CAN DO"

"Rural people are very tough and many have been through droughts before, but this one is so severe it has become quite demoralising, so they will be greatly encouraged by what we can do to give hampers, gifts and educational assistance and support."

Youth group wraps it up

The gifts were boxed up by Lisa's youth group and were ready for shipment to various ministry offices of the Salvation Army for distribution to needy families.

But the question remained - how to get them there? The answer came via an RFS volunteer who offered to transport the goods around the state. Does it get any better?

Thank you to all RFS members for contributing to Operation Farmer's Child and for making a difference in the life of a child at Christmas.





SOUTH GUNDAGAI RURAL FIRE BRIGADE DONATION

The South Gundagai Rural Fire Brigade recently donated \$200 to the Ronald McDonald house in Wagga. This was done in appreciation of food donated by Steve and Kylie Leddin of McDonalds Gundagai during recent fires over the Christmas period.



HEATHCOTE BRIGADE HONOURS WILLIAM "OLD BILL" BRANSTON

Heathcote Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade members came together with their mate Bill Branston on 17 January to help him celebrate his 101st birthday.

Mr Branston came to Australia from England for the wedding of his daughter in the 1970s and liked the country so much that he decided to retire in the land down under.

He moved to Heathcote and joined Heathcote Bushfire Brigade in 1975 at the age of 70, and was still an active firefighter pulling hoses seven years later.

Mr Branston gained a reputation with many people for being extremely caring, particularly in the wake of the Grays Point fire, in which the Brigade lost three firefighters and six others were injured.

He has been made a life member in honour of his commitment to the Brigade.



ILLAWONG RFB ANNUAL SANTA RUNS



2006 marked the second year of the Illawong RFB annual Santa runs with the Brigade visiting the local area of Illawong and Alford's Point.

All nightly runs were a smashing success, providing the local community with a chance to get to know their volunteers.

Santa visited over 1500 people in the week leading up to Christmas, with reports following that the Brigade enjoyed Santa's pre-Christmas visits as much as the local residents did.

Next year the Brigade plans to make more nightly runs and hopes to implement a Santa roster due to the high demand.

Along with lollies and balloons, the Brigade handed out important bushfire information pamphlets to local residents while answering any questions or concerns that they had.



Photos and article by Dean Symons and Melinda Cox

SMILES FROM BURNS VICTIMS

Arcadia Rural Fire Brigade in the North West of Sydney has raised over \$500 in two years after deciding that they would give a Christmas gift to another worthwhile cause. During the Brigade's Christmas Party for members and family, they raised funds for the Burns Unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

"ALTHOUGH NOT A HUGE AMOUNT OF MONEY, WE FEEL THAT EVERY LITTLE BIT COUNTS"

"Although not a huge amount of money, we feel that every little bit counts and are happy to support another area that needs financial assistance", said Captain Pat Modde.

Firefighters pay special visit to kids

This year's cheque for \$250 was taken by a crew from Arcadia to the hospital on Tuesday 9 January, and their visit sent smiles around the children's ward.

"SEEING THE LOOKS ON THEIR FACES WHEN WE WALKED IN MADE IT ALL WORTHWHILE"

"It is frightening to see how children so small can be in so much pain, but seeing the looks on their faces when we walked in made it all worthwhile", said Lori Modde, Secretary of the Arcadia Rural Fire Brigade.

The members that visited the hospital included Captain Pat Modde, firefighters Peter Rumble, Mark Sullivan and Chris Layton, and Secretary Lori Modde. The hospital has invited the Arcadia Rural Fire Brigade back to the Burns Unit anytime they are able to visit, to make the children smile.

Can you help too?

If anyone else would be interested in assisting the Burns Unit, they should email Carol Kavurma at the Hospital on carolk@chw.edu.au for information or for ways to donate.





VOLUNTEERS HELP OUT THEIR OWN

We recently heard the story of Tasmanian volunteer firefighter Barry Wylie and his wife Michelle, who was diagnosed in 2005 with Steven Johnson Syndrome – a rare and often fatal reaction to prescription antibiotics. We thought you'd be interested in their story too.

Here's Barry's account:

On the 2 March 2005, Barry Wylie returned home from work and gave a kiss to his wife Michelle, whom Barry has been married to for 26 years and describes as "one of the most understanding and compassionate ladies God ever made".

Michelle mentioned that she was not feeling well. The next day as they said their goodbyes, she mentioned she would visit her GP later that day. She did see the doctor, who prescribed her an antibiotic to treat a urinary tract infection.

Within two hours of taking the prescribed dose, Michelle was admitted to the Royal Hobart Hospital with a temperature of more than 44

degrees. Her temperature was stabilised and she was sent home. The next morning she awoke with a red rash all over her body and was rushed to her local doctor, who sent her home after prescribing an antihistamine tablet and changing her antibiotics.

At 1130hr the same morning her temperature was once again registering at nearly 40 degrees and she was rushed back to hospital.

Doctors fear for her life

By lunchtime Barry was informed that his wife may die. She had suffered swelling within her body and doctors were concerned that her airways may block. She was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit.

"BY LUNCHTIME BARRY WAS INFORMED THAT HIS WIFE MAY DIE"

Her wedding rings were removed as her body and fingers were swelling at a rapid rate. A feeding tube was placed down her nose. This was later replaced by a food tube inserted directly into her stomach.

"MICHELLE WAS DIAGNOSED AS HAVING STEVEN JOHNSON SYNDROME"

Her breathing and airways became so restricted that Michelle needed to be placed in a medically induced coma to enable a ventilator and humidifier to support her breathing. Michelle was diagnosed as having Steven Johnson Syndrome.

"SHE RAPIDLY LOST ALL HER SKIN, FROM THE TOP OF HER HEAD TO THE BOTTOM OF HER FEET"

The disease continued to take its toll on Michelle as blisters started forming under her chin. She rapidly lost all her skin, from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet, and remained in the coma for more than 140 days to assist her with pain relief by remaining motionless.

Barry spent many days sitting with Michelle, watching her monitors and machinery and sharing his grief with the friends and relatives who visited Michelle in hospital. Visitors had

to constantly wash and sterilise their hands so that infection would not threaten her life.

“MICHELLE’S LUNGS HAD FAILED AND HER KIDNEYS WERE BEING SUPPORTED BY A DIALYSIS MACHINE”

On 9 March, Barry received an early-morning call. He was told that Michelle’s life had taken a turn for the worse. When he arrived at the hospital, Barry was presented with the news that Michelle’s lungs had failed and her kidneys were being supported by a dialysis machine.

“BARRY CRIED AND PRAYED HARD FOR HER TO SURVIVE AND FIGHT HER WAY THROUGH THE DISEASE”

For weeks Michelle remained in a desperate situation. Barry held daily meetings with her specialists and doctors who told him of slight improvements. Michelle’s fragile life was held in the balance. Barry cried and prayed hard for her to survive and fight her way through the disease.

Finally – Michelle regains consciousness

“SHE LOST HER EYESIGHT AND NEEDED EMERGENCY SURGERY TO SAVE HER EYES”

It took several long months for Michelle to regain consciousness – and that is when the true impact of her disease became apparent. Michelle’s body had deteriorated. She lost her eyesight and needed emergency surgery to save her eyes. Her nervous system had broken down, resulting in paralysis in her arms, legs, back, fingers and toes. Her body

was clothed in a burn suit and bandages, and she did not shower for more than 100 days. During this time she also suffered a life-threatening infection of her skin which persisted for more than four months.

“SHE LEARNED TO EAT PUREED FOOD AND DRINK WATER THROUGH HER STOMACH TUBE”

Michelle was unable to speak because of a tracheotomy. Communication was only through lip reading and Michelle nodding or shaking her head to set questions.

Michelle was eventually moved out of this ward and went through more than ten months of recovery, where she learned to eat pureed food and drink water through her stomach tube.

Despite her long and miraculous recovery, Michelle’s doctors still have reservations that her nervous system may not regenerate. If it does, it will only regenerate at a rate of 1mm every day. An arm one metre in length could take more than 1000 days to recover.

Even after the nerves have regrown Michelle would still need an extraordinary amount of physiotherapy in order to regrow and retrain muscles and co-ordination. She has had to survive her ordeal with no eyesight, no movement, no immune defences, little communication and having to trust people she has never met.

“SHE IS A WOMAN THAT ANY MAN WOULD LOVE TO SPEND THEIR LIFE WITH”

Michelle is a woman who took care of her family, loved her home and loved her family. To Barry “she is a woman that any man would love to spend their life with.”

All she wants to do is walk and see again

“SPECIALISTS IN SINGAPORE HAVE STARTED SURGERY TO GROW LIVING TISSUE IN HER MOUTH”

In order for Michelle to recover some of her eyesight, specialists in Singapore have started surgery to grow living tissue in her mouth. The tissue will then be transplanted in order to regrow the front part of her eye.

Michelle’s most recent surgery occurred in November, where doctors began the painful process of removing a tooth containing living tissue, and transplanting it directly into her eye. Unfortunately, during recovery, Michelle contracted a Staph infection in her eye which has caused the need for the surgery to be reversed and the transplant being replaced into her mouth.

Doctors are now waiting to see whether repeat surgery can be scheduled. Currently the Wylies remain in Singapore while Michelle recovers, as she is too fragile to travel. They report they are struggling with the heat and the food, while their two teenage sons remain at home in Tasmania.

This surgery and ongoing rehabilitation is a long and expensive process. The ongoing generosity of Tasmania Fire Service Brigades and generous corporate donors has raised \$60,000 but more money is needed.

All donations, however large or small, will be gratefully accepted and can be sent to the Tasmania Fire Service with cheques made payable to “TFS Charity Event”

Your donation can be sent directly to Linda Lacy at Tasmania Fire Service who will ensure that it is promptly forwarded.

**Linda Lacy
Tasmania Fire Service, GPO Box 1526
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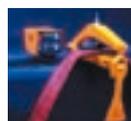


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RFS EVENTS



The Bays Rural Fire Brigade in the Gosford District is presented with a cheque for \$5000.

Out and About with the Minister Kelly and Acting Commissioner, Rob Rogers

- **Station Opening** - Official opening of Tea Gardens Station in the Great Lakes district - Tuesday 30 January.
- **Cheque presentation**- of \$5000 to The Bays Rural Fire Brigade in the Gosford District - Sunday 28 January.
- **Tanker handover**- A Cat 1 tanker was handed over to Dunmore Brigade in the Shellharbour District.- Wednesday 7 February.
- **Tanker handover**- Gloucester appliance handover at the Gloucester Fire Control Centre-Saturday 24 February.
- **Medals and Tanker handover** -Volunteers from the Lismore team were awarded National Medals and Long Service Awards and four tankers were handed over to brigades.

Stay tuned for many more stories and photos on RFS events in the up and coming months!

Come and see what MyRFS has to offer at this year's Regional Exercises!

This year's regional exercises will again test our firefighters in various scenarios. Some of these will include Championship Lane, Motor Vehicle Accidents, Car Fires and Appliance pumping. The first exercise will be held in **Glenn Innes (Region North)** on **16 - 18 March**.

The next stop will be **Region West**, where exercises will be held near **Wellington at Burrendong Dam** between **14 - 16 April**.

Last but no means least will be **Region South's exercise**, held in **Gundagai** on **28 - 29 April**.

MyRFS

Thrown in the mix again this year will be the presence of the MyRFS team. The information tent will provide information on new developments, a spot for feedback and for those of you who have not signed up yet - a peek at what MyRFS is all about!

Mapping component

A new addition to the MyRFS road shows will be the RFS' specialised mapping unit, GIS (Geographic Information Systems). GIS will be demonstrating a web based Fire Weather application at the exercises. The Fire Weather application provides hourly surfaces representing current fire danger conditions at a state wide level. These include temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and the McArthur FFDI. It is hoped that this system will then be used as apart of MyRFS.

Anyone who will not be at the regional exercises will be able to log on to MyRFS for results and news from each event.



Australasian Education and Fire Awareness conference

The Australasian Education and Fire Awareness Conference, hosted by the NSW Rural Fire Service will be held from the 17-19 May 2007 at the Newcastle City Hall Function and Conference Centre.

"THIS YEAR'S KEYNOTE SPEAKERS REPRESENT A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS"

The significance of the Conference reflects the increasing interest and participation of other fire and related agencies from across Australasia as well as from organisations in the private sector.

This year's keynote speakers represent a wealth of knowledge and experience in the delivery of community education programs. Speakers include Graham Brown from the NSW Farmers Federation, Chris Tomes from the Tasmania Fire Service, Barry Hamilton from the United Nations and Paul Baxter, Chief Officer, New Zealand Fire Service.

Based on previous years' attendance it is anticipated that there will be over 450 delegates attending the Conference.

Primarily, delegates are drawn from the various agencies' community safety or community education disciplines. These are either volunteers or salaried staff whose core business is the delivery of bush fire related community education programs to their respective local communities.

Delegates will also have the opportunity to visit the Expo Centre which will showcase a diverse range of products and services, ranging from community educators to producers of emergency services products.

Full conference information and registration forms are now available on the RFS public website www.rfs.nsw.gov.au



AWARDS PRESENTATION

Story by Lisa Edmonds.
Photo by Thorsten Jones,
Hanging Rock Brigade

On Saturday, 10 February 2007, National Medals, Clasps and Long Service Awards were presented to volunteer members of 13 of the 49 brigades across the Northern Rivers Team area.

Four new tankers

In addition to the presentation of medals and awards was the official hand over of the keys of four new tankers to Captains of Hanging Rock, Wiangaree, Dunoon and Blue Knob Brigades.

“I DO IT TO PUT SOMETHING BACK IN THE COMMUNITY, BUT YOU ALSO MAKE GOOD FRIENDS”

National Medal

Two members of the Bentley Brigade within the Lismore Fire Control District, Don Casson and John Sykes, were presented with the National Medal.

“I’m very proud to be recognised,” John Sykes said.

“I do it to put something back in the community, but you also make good friends.

You get a good feeling when you put a fire out, that feeling of satisfaction that you’ve helped somebody.”

Long Service Award

Recognition was also given to two members who have been in the Rural Fire Service for 56 years and 47 years. Respectively, these were Trevor Murray, Old Bonalbo Brigade, (Long Service Award) and John Mace, Tullera Brigade, (National Medal 3rd Clasp).

“YOU GET A GOOD FEELING WHEN YOU PUT A FIRE OUT, THAT FEELING OF SATISFACTION THAT YOU’VE HELPED SOMEBODY”

Honorary member

Eighty-four year old Trevor Murray, who has been a member of the Bobalbo Brigade for 56 years, only stopped fighting fires two years ago. He has now been made an Honorary Member of the Brigade in recognition of his long service.

The ceremony was attended by approximately 90 people, consisting of volunteers, family and friends and staff who witnessed 28 volunteers receiving their awards and the keys to tankers being presented to four very happy brigades.

Awards were presented by the Acting Commissioner, Rob Rogers. Mayor Ernie Bennett (Kyogle Council), Councillor Peter Graham (representing the Mayor of Lismore City Council) and Mr Thomas George, NP MP for Lismore, were also present.

“THE CEREMONY WAS ATTENDED BY APPROXIMATELY 90 PEOPLE”



RICHARD PETCH COVERS UP FOR YELLOW™ AND WHITE PAGES®

Richard Petch will feature on the cover of the Yellow™ and White Pages® directory this year, after being nominated by members of the local Penrith community for his work in the area.

Richard has been chosen as an example of this year's cover theme, 'Champions of our Community' and was honoured to learn of the decision.

NSW Rural Fire Service Cumberland Zone Manager Superintendent Petch was a volunteer firefighter for 22 years before taking on the role of coordinating the 850 RFS volunteers of Penrith, Fairfield and Blacktown.

"Penrith is a tight knit community, so to be recognised on the front cover of the Yellow™ and White Pages® directory is a real honour," Richard said.

"I really appreciate the opportunity to step forward and represent such a progressive and vibrant community that draws life and inspiration from its heritage, the land and its generous people."

Group Manager, White Pages®, Melissa Reynolds believes the 'Champions of our Community' theme provides Sensis with an opportunity to recognise outstanding Australians who champion causes for the benefit of their communities.

"There are some really amazing people in our country making invaluable contributions to their local areas. Local people such as Richard are inspiring examples of the positive effect one person can have on their wider region." Ms Reynolds said.

BRIGADES AND VOLUNTEERS BENEFIT FROM NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Two significant national partnerships between fire agencies and the private sector have reaped good financial rewards for volunteers and brigades.

In 2003, driven by the fires which struck the east coast of Australia and with a strong contingent of employees who are also volunteers, Dulux and Bunnings met with the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) to offer financial assistance to support volunteer firefighters across Australia. This first promotion raised \$200,000 that was made available for funding equipment and training.

Since the campaign's launch, more than \$700,000 has been donated to volunteers across Australia, much of it in support of the 'developing future leaders' program at the Australian Institute of Police Management which has been attended by more than 150 volunteers.

Scrap metal put to good use

Another national campaign designed to benefit individual rural fire brigades is The Smorgon Steel Great Scrap Metal Round-up, also co-ordinated through AFAC – which has been running for three years. So far over \$1M has been raised for brigades

around the country with ACT/NSW brigades receiving \$230,252. In this campaign Smorgons collect any farm scrap metal over five tonnes and donate \$15 per tonne for the benefit of volunteer firefighters, 75% of which goes directly to nominated brigades and 25% of which helps to fund a national volunteer training scheme.

These two initiatives show how working with the private sector can be of substantial benefit not only to the Service but, more importantly, to our volunteers and their brigades.

LAGUNA LOCALS GET FIREWISE

By Glenn O'Rourke, Laguna Rural Fire Brigade

On Saturday 21 October 2006, Laguna Rural Fire Brigade invited local residents of the Watagan Creek Road area to attend its annual FireWise meeting. Laguna Brigade has developed a strategy of focusing its FireWise activities each year on a particular region within its large brigade area which totals approximately 500 square kilometres of the Wollombi Valley, Watagan State Forest and Yengo National Park, located in the Hunter.

With the upcoming fire season predicted to be a potentially dangerous one, the aim of the meeting was to give locals an understanding of fire, its behaviour and how to prepare their house and properties against the threat of bush and grass fires.

Stay or go?

Locals were also advised on how to prepare a Bushfire Survival Plan, and discussed the importance of the critical decision to 'stay or go' during a fire event. The Brigade highlighted the recent research findings published by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre demonstrating that people who were well prepared for fire and stayed to defend their homes were more likely to survive than those who stayed but fled at the last moment.

Over 25 locals joined the Laguna Brigade for the presentation. The meeting finished with a sausage sizzle and an opportunity to chat informally with Brigade members about any specific issues regarding home 'fire safety'.

Brigade receives great feedback

Those who attended rated the meeting as very valuable, with Brigade members receiving positive feedback including, 'excellent and timely, I feel safer already', 'well presented and useful' and '[the] presentation has encouraged me to start straight away implementing practical steps to make my home as safe as possible'.



Premier Morris Iemma and Larry O'Carroll with the award won by Baulkham Hills for the FireWise program.
Photo taken by Belinda Landry

2006 SAFER COMMUNITIES AWARDS; BAULKHAM HILLS DISTRICT FIREWISE FUEL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Story by Larry O'Carroll

Late last year, the Baulkham Hills Rural Fire District was awarded the Australian Safer Communities Award for its FireWise program.

The District is part of the NSW Rural Fire Service and has 680 volunteers who are responsible for protecting 21,000 people and around 6,700 homes from bushfires.

Helping locals help themselves

The FireWise fuel management program was created in order to enable members of the community to protect themselves from the effects of a bushfire in a proactive rather than a reactive way.

The program aims to educate the community about the danger of bushfires in their area and how to minimise the impact and danger to their property, enabling them to minimise bushfire risk for themselves and their property.

Immediately effective

The FireWise program is a partnership between the RFS and the community and is intended to benefit the emergency services, councils, businesses, individuals and households. The program has been extremely successful in ensuring homes and properties are protected.

"THE PROGRAM AIMS TO EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE DANGER OF BUSHFIRES IN THEIR AREA"

Implemented through community meetings and forums, its effectiveness and efficiency

was evident when soon after the forums local suppliers sold over 1,000 pump and hose kits. Later that year, when bushfire swept through the area, 99% of the 3,296 homes in the fire line were saved.

Best practice amongst the emergency service industry and the community is encouraged by emphasising the importance of being proactive rather than reactive.

It is for these reasons the Baulkham Hills FireWise program received the Australian Safer Communities Award.

"99% OF THE 3,296 HOMES IN THE FIRE LINE WERE SAVED"

26TH AUSTRALASIAN POLICE TRAP CHAMPIONSHIP

Three volunteers and one staff member attended the 26th Australasian Police Trap Championship held at Bendigo, Victoria in October 2006.

Superintendent David Hagarty, Operations Officer for the Barwon Darling Zone, and his partner Clare Kesby, member of Brewarrina Rural Fire Brigade, were joined by Rob and Wendy Waugh, members of the Lake Albert Rural Fire Brigade from the Riverina Zone.

The first trap event was the 50 target Handicap with Clare Kesby shooting 45/50 to finish fourth. David Hagarty shot well enough to get into a shoot off for fifth, but then dropped his first target and finished without placing.

Winds blow scores away

Conditions for the 50 target Pointscore began to worsen, with southerly winds increasing and scores reflecting the conditions. Despite the weather, Rob Waugh finished first in B Grade with a score of 121/150, Wendy scored second in B Grade with 111/150, and Clare won C Grade and the Ladies with a score of 129/150.

The second day commenced with the 50 target Single Barrel. Conditions once again worsened as temperatures decreased, with snow being reported at Ballarat. Wendy Waugh braved the chill and won B Grade and Ladies with a score of 42/50, while Clare Kesby won C Grade with a score of 37/50.

Ladies stay strong

In the 50 target Double Barrel championship, Wendy Waugh kept the form going and again won B Grade and Ladies with a score of 46/50. Clare Kesby won C Grade with a score of 39/50 and was then upgraded to B Grade.

The last day commenced with the 60 target Champion of Champions in continuing windy conditions. Clare had success in the new grade coming second and winning the Ladies with a score of 77/100.

The last event was the 25 target Ball Trap Championship. Rob Waugh was amongst the money coming second in C Grade with a score of 22/25.

Disappointment for one member

Whilst most members had success at the carnival, David Hagarty had a 'bad day at the office' and was unable to make the Australasian Police and Service Teams to compete at the World Police and Fireman's Games at Adelaide in March 2007.

The 27th Australasian Police Trap Championship will be held at Majura Park in Canberra in 2007 and will be hosted by the Australian Federal Police.





'SOLO' THE FIREWISE DALMATIAN NEEDS A DANCE PARTNER

Story by Gillian Katz.

The Lakes Team's FireWise Mascot 'Solo' is currently searching for a partner with one left and one right foot to join him at the Lakes Team's inaugural Volunteer Firefighters Formal Bash (Vee Triple F Ball). This event was the brain-child of volunteers from both Wyong and Lake Macquarie districts, inspired by similar events hosted by the NSWFB and neighbouring Rural Fire Districts.

Event held at Lake Macquarie

Lake Macquarie will form the backdrop for this year's event, which is being held at the Belmont 16 Footers Sailing Club, which is almost geographically central to the two districts.

"THE BALL IS PRIMARILY ABOUT GETTING TOGETHER, DRESSING UP AND HAVING GREAT NIGHT OUT"

Winter Fire Safety message

The event is on Saturday 2 June, which is right in the middle of the Winter Fire Safety season. Due to this, the Winter Fire Safety message will be promoted in the lead-up to

the big night. The ball however is primarily about getting together, dressing up and having great night out.

Local artists will entertain

Local artists will be providing the entertainment, with hypnotist Steven Spellmaster and a local cover band, "Distant Thunder" featuring some of our very talented musically inclined volunteers and staff. There will also be some special guest appearances throughout the evening.

"THE EVENT WILL ALSO BE A FUND-RAISING OPPORTUNITY WITH PROCEEDS FROM THIS YEAR'S EVENT GOING TOWARDS THE JOHN HUNTER CHILDREN'S BURNS REHABILITATION UNIT"

Whilst primarily a social event for volunteers, their friends and other local Emergency Services colleagues, the event will also be a fund-raising opportunity with proceeds from this year's event going towards the John Hunter Children's Burns Rehabilitation Unit.

Tickets are available by contacting Wyong Fire Control Centre on (02) 4393 6222.

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SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

IN THE LIFE OF BRIGADES

“I want to know what other brigades are doing” was one of the most popular responses in last year’s Bushfire Bulletin reader survey. In a state that varies in temperature, terrain and population, it’s only natural that brigades would be curious what their country and city cousins are up to.

With that in mind, we took a snap shot of three separate brigades over the same two week period in January and February so that we could see inside their day-to-day activities. The time recorded in no way reflects the brigade activities experienced by each group for the other 50 weeks of the year, however, what it does reflect is that each brigade has a personality that is distinctly their own.

Whether it’s facing the difficulties encountered while moving into a new shed, joining their fellow volunteers for a 0300hr call out, or responding to a grass fire, both city and country volunteers seem to do it the same way – with dedication and, at times, great humour.

TWO WEEKS WITH THE MURWILLUMBAH RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Thank you to David Cook for this contribution

Murwillumbah Rural Fire Brigade are a typical Village Two Rural Fire Brigade. The Brigade has considerable bushfire, Village and Highway responsibilities. The Brigade consists of 37 active members under the keen leadership of Captain Ken Harrison and Senior Deputy Captain Troy Hodges.

Many of the Brigade’s members are also members of the SES and in fact share a joint fire station and SES headquarters which was generously funded by the State Government and Tweed Shire Council. The Brigade has two appliances, a Category 1 Village tanker and a category 7 tanker. The Brigade are fully



equipped in CABA and offensive structural fire fighting equipment. In the previous twelve months 01/02/06 – 01/02/07 the Brigade made 124 primary emergency responses and also a significant number of support responses. The Brigade volunteers issued 144 fire permits in the previous 12 months.

Saturday 20 January

Three crew members organised and despatched to Section 44 bushfires at Thredbo/ Cooma. Permits issued and Community Education activity conducted. Two appliances and 11 crew responded to a car fire which was the result of a domestic dispute, which also caused a secondary bushfire at UKI.

Tuesday 23 January

Two appliances and six crew responded to two suspicious bushfires along Reserve Creek Road Kielvale.

Wednesday 24 January

Two appliances and five crew responded to a grass fire which resulted from downed power lines in Kings Gully Stokers Siding. Two crew members despatched to Section 44 fires in Tamworth.

Friday 26 January

One appliance and three crew responded to oil spill on Numinbah Road, Kynnumboon.

Saturday 27 January

Two appliances and five crew responded to grass fire Riverside drive Tumbulgum.

Monday 29 January

One appliance and five crew members responded to MVA/ persons trapped Clothiers Creek Road, Nunderi.

Tuesday 30 January

Two units and nine crew members responded to a fully involved structural fire on Tomewin Road, Tomewin. Captain issued permits and conducted community Education activity. Later the same day two units and thirteen crew members were re responded to the structural incident due to reported flare ups. Brigade general meeting held in the evening.

Friday 5 January

Two units and eight crew responded to grass fire on Tumbulgum Road Murwillumbah allegedly the result of illegal drug activity from persons unknown.

TWO WEEKS WITH THE DARETON BRIGADE

Thank you to Peter Nunan and Fred Adthorpe for this contribution

Saturday 20 January

All quiet on the Western front. Members on stand by due to very warm conditions but thankfully no fires.

Sunday 21 January

Brigade muster – radios and equipment checked. Trucks taken for a short test run.

Monday 22 January

“THE TURN OUT WAS LIVENED UP BY A SERIES OF EXPLODING GAS BOTTLES”



**MURWILLUMBAH
RURAL FIRE BRIGADE
AT THE SCENE OF
A STRUCTURE FIRE,
TOMEWIN ROAD,
TOMEWIN**

Top: The brand new station

Bottom: Dareton Rural Fire Brigade's old station



Members met at our temporary brigade for an informal meeting. General discussion was had on our charity golf day.

At 2100hr a call out was received to a house fire believed to be deliberately lit. Dareton, Curlwaa and Gol Gol crews attended and the turn out was livened up by a series of exploding gas bottles. No crew members were harmed although some mentioned extra cleaning of PPE might be required!

Tuesday 23 January

Members met to debrief over a few icy cold ones.

Wednesday 24 January

"THE BRIGADE COULD NOW MOVE INTO THE NEW STATION BUILDING"

Members received notification that the brigade could now move into the new station building. Been waiting a long time to hear this news!

Thursday and Friday 25 – 26 January

All quiet. Members looking forward to the move into the new station.

"A GREAT AUSSIE BARBEQUE AND REFRESHMENTS SEALED A GREAT DAY FOR OUR BRIGADE"

Saturday 27 January

All hands on deck as we moved into the new station. Twice the room available but plenty of junk to shift! Earnest discussions were

had on the type of carpet to be installed. A great Aussie Barbeque and refreshments sealed a great day for our brigade.

Sunday 28 January

Regular Sunday muster, although some members seemed to be a bit slow following yesterday's move and subsequent celebrations.

Monday 29 January

Informal meeting of members in the new station, and some rearrangement of furniture and equipment.

Tuesday 30 January

All quiet, as most members were busy with harvest related activities.

Wednesday 31 January

All quiet.

Thursday 1 February

The Charity golf day sub-committee met, with Murray House (an aged care hostel in Wentworth) to be the beneficiary of funds raised.

Friday 2 February

"TWO VEHICLES HAD BEEN SET ALIGHT"

At 0130hr a call out was received to the same address as on 22 January. Two vehicles had been set alight with some damage caused to a neighbouring property.

Saturday 3 February

All quiet.

Sunday 4 February

Sunday muster. Equipment thoroughly checked as very high temperatures are forecast for early in the coming week. Members ready for any call-outs.

A WEEK WITH ST GEORGES BASIN RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Thank you to Michell Thornley for this contribution

"THE BEST PART OF THE DAY FOR SOME OF THE BOYS (BEN IN PARTICULAR) WERE THE PROMOTIONAL GIRLS"



Saturday 20 January

The day started at the station at 0730 for the crew (Ben, Linda, Steph, Col, David, Tiffany, Pete M, Susana and Tommy) that volunteered to assist at the Motocross. The nine of them including two juniors, headed off not knowing exactly what they would be doing for the day. It was a hot day for them all as they assisted with the wetting down of the car park, gate entry, BBQ and other tasks. However, it was said that the best part of the day for some of the boys (Ben in particular) were the promotional girls. The day was a success raising over \$2000 for the brigade, and the crew returned at 1630 hot, tired and exhausted. Secretary Marlene also compiled some info for a member who was transferring to another brigade.

"CAT 2S REALLY DON'T FLOAT TOO WELL"

Sunday 21 January

As today was an extremely hot and dry day, we expected to have some fire activity. However, some of the newer members were disappointed when it was discovered only one fire occurred in our area and we were not able to attend. The fire occurred on the Island in the middle of St Georges Basin and as our brigade is not equipped with a boat we weren't able to attend. Cat 2s really don't float too well. Activity reports were completed to be sent to fire control, and after checking our records for long service and national medal applications we realised we had two members due. Minutes from last weeks meeting were also completed to be passed on to our publicity officer to go into our monthly newsletter, which once again kept our secretary busy.

"I SOMETIMES THINK WE MUST KEEP COCA-COLA IN BUSINESS"

Monday 22 January

A quiet day today, with Darryl taking care of the drink fridge that needed filling up. I sometimes think we must keep Coca-Cola in business. Our auto electrician finished wiring our new hose winder on the Cat 2 and fixed up the battery charger for the Cat 7. Linda organised recruiting night for Wednesday night, while Col our Training Officer spent a few hours compiling a training session on fire investigation.

“THE LITTLE BLACK BOXES WENT BEEP, BEEP, BEEP - AN MVA”**Tuesday 23 January**

Tuesday is the day we are always short crewed, so we were hoping we wouldn't get a call. Then at 1431 guess what happened? The little black boxes went beep, beep, beep - an MVA. My first reaction was that this would probably be the first time that we wouldn't be able to turn out. But then the phone rang and Jeff said he had just come into to area and was available, so we now had a driver. Now all we needed was a crew leader. Suddenly, I had an unexpected visitor, which enabled me to leave. Nine minutes later we were out of the station with a crew of two - better than none at all - only to get two kilometres up the road and be stood down. Later that night some maintenance was carried out Tommy coupled some hoses, while I changed the roller door codes for security reasons. Our Senior Deputy then completed our CABA training roster for the upcoming year.

“CONSIDERING SHE'D HAD HER FIRST BABY 10 DAYS EARLIER IT WAS A FINE EXAMPLE OF BRIGADE COMMITMENT”**Wednesday 24 January**

Quiet day firewise with nothing much happening. Darryl issued some permits and did some radio maintenance, while Jeff our “fix it man” took care of some small repairs. Linda, Tommy and I took care of junior recruitment for the upcoming year. Senior Deputy Angela completed her monthly newsletter (Flashover), which is distributed at the end of the month. Considering she'd had her first baby 10 days earlier it was a fine example of brigade commitment.

“WE FIND THE PROGRAM THANKS THE MEMBERS THAT WORK HARD WHILE ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO HELP SOME MORE”**Thursday 25 January**

Doc phoned some of the crew trying to get people to assist with fundraising, which we do on a monthly basis. Since it was a long weekend, and a lot people were away, we didn't get much of a response and had to put another page across. Linda, my new personal assistant, completed an email to be sent to a past member who will be



joining a brigade in the new town he has moved to. She also worked on Fire Buys, a program we have had in place for many years, which is similar to Flybuys. Points are issued for attending meetings, trainings, fundraising, community education and activities that all members are entitled to attend. From there they can redeem items for their points - I.E. brigade shirts, jackets, hats, torches, first aid kits, woollen socks, knives, gear bags etc. We find the program thanks the members that work hard while encouraging others to help some more. Col spent three hours working on power point presentations for training and a few more organising our 2007 training Calendar.

Friday 26 January (Australia Day)

Today was a public holiday, so I was hoping to have a sleep in... until pagers were activated

at 0819. So much for the sleep in. We soon discovered that a fire alarm had gone off at the nursing home, where we are regular visitors. Awoken from their beauty sleep were Jeff, Tommy, Darryl, Trish, Linda (and myself)... only to find that they had burnt the toast again. Radioed fire control and were returning to the station when we received a message to respond to Jervis Bay retirement village for another Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) (today must have been the day for AFAs!).

“ONE THING I LEARNT TODAY: HORSES + SUMMER = ALWAYS TAKE THE AEROGUARD!”

We returned to station at 0908. Crew left to go and enjoy their day off work. At 1256 pagers were beeping again - another AFA at the nursing home - but not the toast again we hoped! Got there to find a faulty detector, isolated it and reset the panel, then returned to station at 1324. Hopefully no more AFAs today - maybe they come in threes? At 1530 it was time to go to the Dressage club to set up the arenas. One thing I learnt today: horses + summer = always take the Aeroguard! Back at station at 1900. So much for a quiet relaxing public holiday.

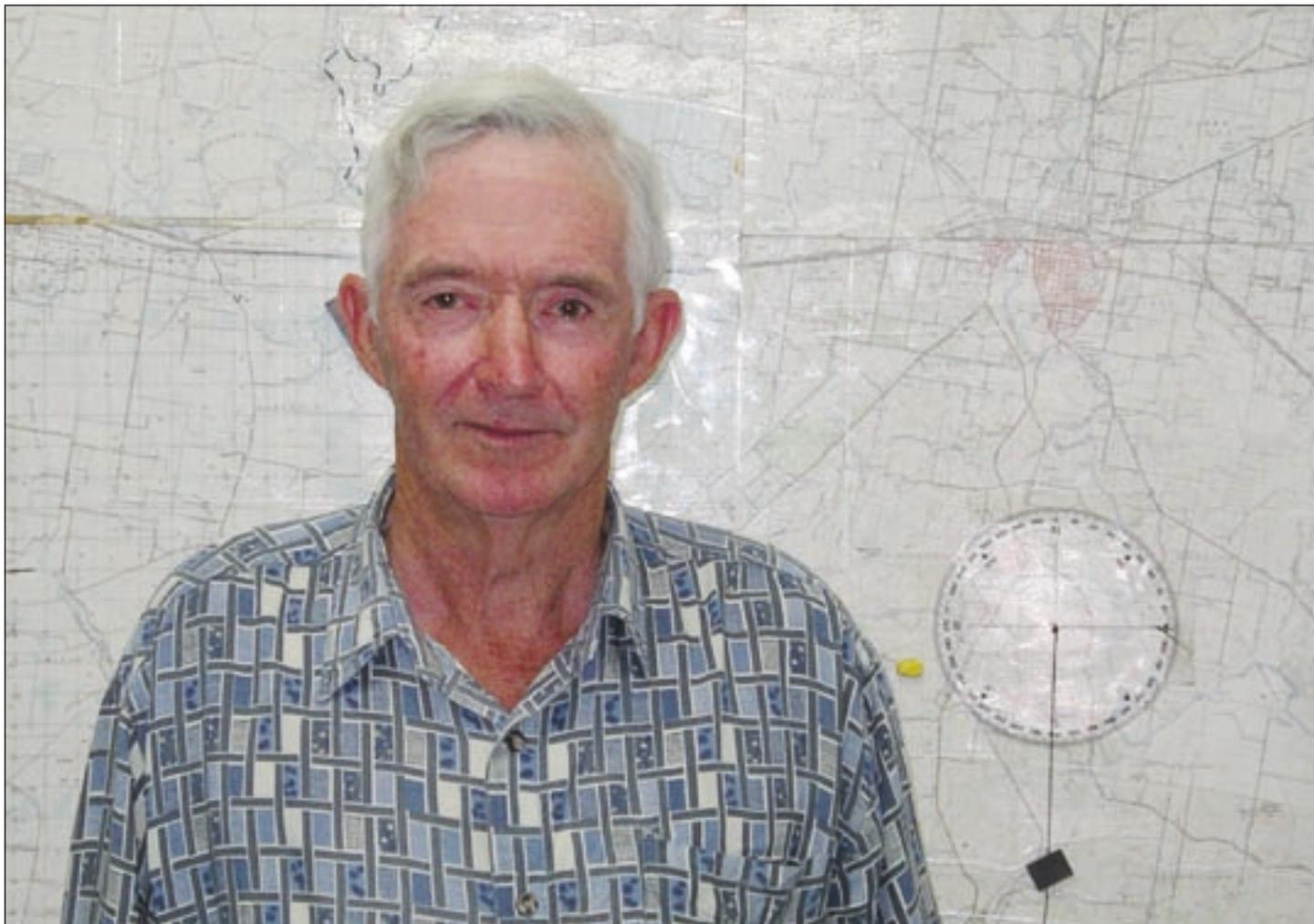
Saturday 27 January

Rude awakening at 0302 due to a structural fire in Vincentia. We received phone calls from extra Breathing Apparatus (BA) operators advising us that they were available if needed. As the Senior Deputy is not available for callouts, I must get out of bed, reminding me that I really don't like early morning callouts. Departed station at 0309, which is a good response at 0300 in the morning. Crew looked just great (yeah right!), at that time of morning, making me glad I only have to see them that way now and again. We soon arrived on site to find Sanctuary Point Brigade and Police.

The house had been broken into and set on fire on the lower storey. The primary damage included smoke damage to the upper storey, lower storey fire damage and smoke damage. Ben and Tommy donned BA and entered to do fire attack and ventilation. One of our best ever brigade purchases was our trusty positive pressure ventilator (PPV). Meanwhile, Linda and Alicia had the hoses in place, ready to enter the building, with Darryl as their trusty BA Control Officer (BACO). Doc remained at station in case we needed lighting as we already had a full crew. David then met us on site so he and Linda could be the BA backup team. We returned to station at 0420, closed down at 0530 after the gear was cleaned, and the crew then headed home for a sleep. I, however, was not so lucky - got home to have my 11mth old wake up for breakfast.

You can read about the rest of St Georges Basin's fortnight on the RFS Public Website, at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

Thank you to all the brigades who participated in this feature. If you would like to see your brigade featured in the next edition, contact the editor at Bushfire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au.



**OFFICER IN PROFILE
JOHN MACKENZIE,
GROUP CAPTAIN,
DUBBO ORANA ZONE
YEARS IN SERVICE: 53**

**“KNOWN FOR HIS WORK
IN FIRES, FLOODS AND
STORM DAMAGE, AND FOR
JUST HELPING MATES IN
TROUBLE”**

In 1991, John MacKenzie was awarded the National Medal, and on Australia Day this year was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for services to the community. He is known for his work in fires, floods and storm damage, and for just helping mates in trouble. He is this issue's Officer In Profile.

Name: John MacKenzie

Rank: Group Captain

District/Team/Zone: Dubbo/Orana

Years in Service: Commenced 1954 – 53 years

1. How did you get involved in the service?

The brigade needed more active people.

2. Can you give us a brief history of your progression through the service?

I joined the Eumungerie Bush Fire Brigade on 15 September 1954 as an active member. On 21 August 1974 I was elected as Secretary/Treasurer, a position I still hold

today. From 21 August 1983 to 24 August 1987 I held the position of Senior Deputy Captain and during that time (on 1 October 1985) was appointed to the position of Group Captain, a position I also still hold today.

3. What has been your most memorable moment?

Receiving the National Medal with twenty-four of my mates from Tom Slattery, who was the Mayor of Dubbo at that time.

**“THE FIRE TRUCK I WAS ON
WAS INVOLVED IN A FIRE
OVERRUN”**

4. What has been your worst fire?

Maybe not my worst fire, but the worst experience was when the fire truck I was on was involved in a fire overrun. I will never forget that.

5. What do you think is the most significant change you have seen in the service?

The type of equipment we have today compared to earlier days.

**“DURING THE NIGHT
TIME THE AIR LITERALLY
EXPLODED INTO FLAMES”**

6. What is the strangest thing you have experienced at a fire?

The S44 Goonoo 'Barry's Fire' 2004. During the night time the air literally exploded into flames.

7. What were the groupies like when you joined the service? Were they different to the ones around today?

Not really, except for that fact that we now have females, which we did not have in earlier days.

8. What's the hardest thing about being a groupie?

Trying to get along with everyone, not treading on all their toes and the never-ending changes.

9. What is your favourite tool carried on RFS appliances and why?

The rake-hoe, because it has replaced the rake and shovels.

10. Any final thoughts or comments?

I would like to encourage any young person to join a brigade, as the different things you can experience with your fellow members can make you mates for life. Through the years I have met some very fine people and would encourage young people to experience the same thing by joining.



Jan Andrews and Ashley Keenan.

BARWON DARLING VOLUNTEER HEADS FOR THE BIG SMOKE

Barwon Darling Zone Headquarters volunteer firefighter Mr Ashley Keenan headed for the "Big Smoke" of Sydney in early January, this year. Ashley, the golden voice of Bourke radio station 2WEB will hang up his 2WEB microphone while he is in Sydney.

Ashley has gained acceptance into the prestigious Australian Film, Television and Radio School to study the Graduate Diploma in Commercial Radio Broadcasting for the next 12 months. Ashley is a very active member in the headquarters brigade and has already attended several Section 44 fires this season. He intends to take a leave of absence from his firefighting duties while he attends his course.

High praise all round

"VERY DEDICATED YOUNG VOLUNTEER WHO IS WILLING TO HAVE A GO"

Supt. Jan Andrews, Barwon Darling Zone Manager, commented, "We are losing a very committed and very dedicated young volunteer who is willing to have a go. Everyone in the Zone is wishing him every success for his future ventures and we are expecting some good comments and airtime from him down in Sydney". According to radio station manager Ms Sue Smith, "This is a very sad moment in the history of the radio station, losing one of the most talented 21 year old announcers". 2WEB is renowned for having produced a plethora of talent over the years. Steve Ahern, an ex-announcer from 2WEB, went on to be the head of the radio department at AFTRS.

Will be sorely missed

Inspector Ross West, Community Safety Officer for the Barwon Darling Zone, said, "I will miss Ash's input a lot more as he was the co-creator and producer of our radio show Sundown Serenades.

"ONE OF THOSE VOLUNTEERS WHOM YOU COULD CALL UPON TO HELP WITH ANY EVENT"

"Ash was also one of those volunteers whom you could call upon to help with any event where the RFS was present and that is something that is going to be really missed".

TRAINING

“RFS BRIGADE TRAINING – THE INSIDE STORY”

Story by Dan Meijer.

In the last few editions of the Bushfire Bulletin we have brought you some ideas and guides for running training in your brigades.

In this edition we will look at how brigades are actually running their training and exercise sessions in order to see what sort of issues surround brigade training and how brigades are helping their members to keep up their skills.

We interviewed four members from around NSW:

- Andrew Sutherland, DC at Gulgong Brigade (Cudgegong District);
- Cliff Spong, Captain at Wamboin Brigade (Lake George Zone);
- Adrian Reynolds, Captain at Exeter Brigade (Wingecarribee District); and
- Bluey Flaherty, DC at Freeman’s Reach Brigade, and Deputy Group Captain (Hawkesbury District).

BFB: How does your brigade organise training? For example, monthly training afternoon, weekly training night, annual pre-fire season muster?

“MEMBERS CAN ALSO REQUEST EXTRA TRAINING”

Andrew: Training is fortnightly on Monday nights, with cadets on the alternate weeks. Members can also request extra training. Recently we’ve run requested training on topics like pump refreshers and driver training.

Bluey: We hold a monthly training evening on the first Monday of the month. These training evenings cover Basic, Advanced and Crew Leader topics so that they cover the needs of all members. We also organise exercises on occasional Sundays.

Adrian: We meet weekly. Some nights are training, others are equipment maintenance or a report from the Captain on what is happening in the District.

Cliff: We run three regular training sessions per month, scattered so that they can accommodate members’ family, social and employment commitments - the first Tuesday night of the month, second Saturday, and fourth Sunday.

BFB: How do you encourage attendance?

“WE HAVE A FAMILY BBQ AT THE END OF THE DAY”

Andrew: We try to keep members interested by providing a variety of different training topics, and making sure it’s fairly hands-on. Members also suggest the types of training that they feel they need.

Bluey: It can be difficult to motivate members to attend training. For our Sunday afternoon training we have a family BBQ at the end of the day. We have found that this works as the children and partners come along and join in.

I try to encourage other Brigade members to become active and run some of the training sessions. This encourages those members to read up and develop their skills in the given area, which also improves them as firefighters.

Adrian: This year we’re trying to get better attendance by setting up in advance a calendar of what will be done each week. By seeing that there is a definite program set, we hope that more members will be regular attendees at the weekly training nights.

“WE TRY TO MAKE TRAINING EXERCISES REALISTIC”

Cliff: We email reminders to all Brigade members, and issue a calendar of events that includes training dates and training topics for that session/day. The Deputy Captains are also in regular contact with their crews which helps the spread of information.

We also encourage attendance by varying the way training is presented. We try to make training exercises realistic; even using

make-up techniques to simulate injuries, staging motor vehicle accidents at night, and organising property protection exercises at the homes of local residents.

BFB: Do your members find brigade training valuable? If so, why? If not, why not?

“OUR TRAINING HAS DELIVERED RESULTS ON THE FIREGROUND”

Andrew: They seem to enjoy it but there is always room to improve the training. Our training has delivered results on the fireground with members being more confident and professional. We’ve even had requests from other neighbouring brigades to join in on our nights which is really positive.

“WE CHOOSE PRACTICAL HANDS-ON TRAINING”

Bluey: Brigade members do find training valuable. To make sure that we do not place too high a demand on the members’ time, we choose practical hands-on training as it is preferred by most of our members compared to doing theory for long periods.

Our members understand the need to continually train in hose drills, map reading and indeed all areas of equipment use and fire suppression so that they can provide the community with the best possible fire protection whilst maintaining a safe and healthy work environment.

Adrian: I believe that they do find it valuable, particularly the newer members who can learn from the experience of the longer-term members by training with them.

“THIS ALSO ENHANCES CAMARADERIE, MORALE AND CONFIDENCE”

Cliff: The feedback we receive from our members shows that those who attend



WAMBOIN TRAINING

Photo by Cliff Spong

Photo by Bernie O'Rourke



regularly benefit from reinforcement and variety of presentation of the subjects. This also enhances camaraderie, morale and confidence. The members also like the realism of our training exercises.

BFB: How do you ensure post-course work (e.g. AF and CL) is completed at your brigade?

Andrew: We try to plan Brigade training activities around the post-course work that needs to be completed.

Bluey: Post-course work has always been a challenge. My Brigade encourages members who have post-course work to complete in the areas of AF and CL to act as the OIC for a response crew under the supervision of a member who is qualified in the respective level of training.

“I ENCOURAGE QUALIFIED MEMBERS TO MENTOR THE TRAINEES”

Adrian: Post-course work is an issue as many members find it hard to attend the weekend courses, let alone find more time to do the post-course work. I encourage qualified members to mentor the trainees and help them complete the post-course activities.

Cliff: We emphasise that it is a member's responsibility to record training in their workbooks and obtain an appropriate signature, but we also encourage them to work with their crew leader to help them organise the activities. We also have two qualified RFI's in the Brigade who help members keep the completion of this work on track.

BFB: What do you find hinders brigade-level training? How do you overcome this?

“WE ARE FLEXIBLE WITH TRAINING TIMES”

Andrew: Balancing Brigade time with work and home commitments is still the hardest issue to overcome. Getting all of the members together at the same time is also difficult due to shift work or seasonal requirements such as shearing or harvesting. To overcome this we are flexible with training times – sometimes we conduct training on a rural property during the day with other shift workers, or try to also do a weekend session.

Adrian: The main issues with Brigade training are the Captain and Training Officer finding time to organise interesting and relevant sessions, and getting all members to attend regularly. If you don't have all members at a training session you are just “preaching to the converted” who probably need the training less than those who are not attending.

“THE VOLUNTEERS ARE BALANCING COMMITMENTS TO FAMILIES, EMPLOYMENT AND A SOCIAL LIFE”

Cliff: The volunteers are balancing commitments to families, employment and a social life. We face the problems of ensuring people come consistently to the regular programmed sessions and as a result there is a certain amount of repetitious training we have to provide to maintain competency levels.

There is also an impact created by the time it takes to get new members qualified. Many people have ever-increasing commitments in their lives and sometimes the Brigade has to come last. If the instructors don't have time to prepare different and varied material the members may lose interest.

Bluey: The demand on volunteers' time has to be juggled between the training programs established by the District and the brigades, the need to implement hazard-reduction programs, and the ever-increasing number of incidents being attended.

The establishment of a Brigade training calendar, with the members having a say as to how we carry out the training, has been a good tool in making it easier for members to participate.

“THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE OF BRIGADE MEMBERS IS MONITORED BY ALL FIELD OFFICERS”

My Brigade has not set a required number of training sessions that each member has to attend. Instead, the level of performance of Brigade members is monitored by all field officers and myself. This provides an avenue for any areas where a member's skills have dropped off to be identified and rectified.

BFB: What do you think of training materials supplied by the RFS?

Andrew: The module manuals have been vastly improved. These have been well received by many of the newer and younger members.



Photo by Cliff Spong



Bluey Flaherty

Adrian: The materials are generally OK, but the size of some of the printed handbooks (e.g. for BF) is now becoming quite daunting for some trainees.

Bluey: The RFS is putting out some excellent training material. However sometimes it is written in complex language. This can make it difficult for training officers to explain to our members what it all means in common language, but overall the material and aids provided are of a very high standard and do make the training of members an easier task.

“THE TRAINING BULLETINS ARE VALUABLE AND APPRECIATED”

Cliff: Overall we think they are good and pitched at an appropriate level. The training bulletins are valuable and appreciated. The biggest weakness is that there are no formal training modules for use at the brigade level.

BFB: Have you found a new or different way of running training which your members have found effective?

“JOINT TRAINING WITH OUR LOCAL NSWFB AND VRA BROADENS OUR MEMBERS’ CAPABILITIES”

Andrew: Joint training with our local NSWFB and VRA broadens our members’ capabilities and gives them an appreciation of being part of a wider emergency services community. We have also found that videoing practical sessions helps in the debrief process by letting members see themselves in action, and comment on their own performance, rather than relying on the comments of an observer.

Cliff: Rather than separately training people at their own qualification levels, our Brigade training is pitched at the AF level. This presents a challenge for those only qualified at the BF level; it provides revision for those at the AF level; and for those qualified at the CL level we get them to focus on what they need to do as CLs to manage and guide the firefighters.

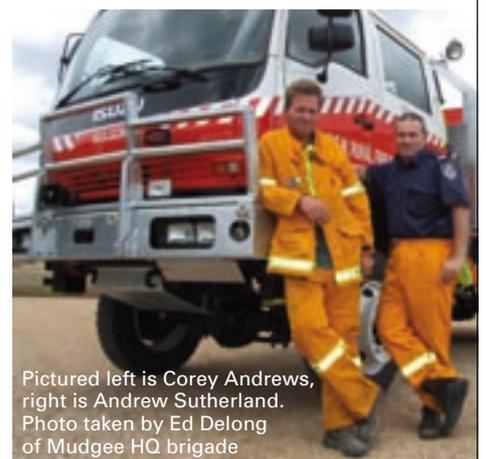
“ALLOWING PEOPLE TO SEE HOW THEIR ROLE FITS IN WITH EVERYTHING ELSE”

We also ensure that the drivers, pump operators, first-aiders and others have tasks to perform in exercises. We are trying to make sure individual skill levels are improved at the same time as allowing people to see how their role fits in with everything else going on at an incident.

Adrian: We have monthly joint training nights with two other brigades. Each brigade takes it in turn to organise and host the session. This takes some pressure off the Captain and Training Officer and gives members different and more varied training experiences.

Thank you to these members for giving up their time to be interviewed, and also to their brigade members who helped compile information.

In the next Bushfire Bulletin, we’ll look at training in defensive firefighting and property protection, and RFS assessment procedures.



Pictured left is Corey Andrews, right is Andrew Sutherland. Photo taken by Ed Delong of Mudgee HQ brigade

Photo by Bernie O'Rourke



Q&A WITH L&D – TIPS ON TRAINING

Training – Who is responsible for what? What permissions are necessary? Where can brigades get more information on training? We recently sat down with Dan Meijer from Learning and Development Systems to get some answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about brigade training.

How is brigade level training different from that at a District/Team/Zone (D/T/Z) level?

In general, D/T/Z training is run as a series of formal courses which lead towards an RFS certification. Brigade training is usually less

formal, involving practising the skills learnt at these courses, increasing local area knowledge and preparing for attending incidents.

Do you need permission to run training activities at a brigade level?

You don't need permission to generally run training. However, you may need to seek appropriate permission to use certain areas for training, e.g. a school or a landholder's property. Whether you're doing an inspection for Pre-Incident Planning, or practising a hose drill in a paddock, make sure that you're allowed to be there. You may also need to check with your Duty FCO before taking your appliance out of service for training.

New members must go through the relevant RFS checks and processes before being allowed to participate in training.

What is the role of the Brigade Training Officer?

“RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE COORDINATING TRAINING FOR BRIGADE MEMBERS AND ENSURING THAT INFORMATION IS SHARED BETWEEN THE MEMBERS AND THE REST OF THE RFS”

The Captain has responsibility for brigade training. If a training officer is elected then the responsibility is assigned to them. Responsibilities include coordinating training for brigade members and ensuring that information is shared between the members and the rest of the RFS. This includes planning brigade training activities, organising members' nominations for D/T/Z courses, and helping to coordinate members' post-course practice sessions (e.g. Advanced Firefighter (AF) and Crew Leader (CL)). Remember, the training officer does not have to run the activities; they just need to make them happen. You can and should use appropriate brigade members for facilitating training.

What happens if a brigade does not have a Brigade Training Officer?

The Captain has responsibility for brigade-level training.

What is the role of brigades in post-course practice activities?

The brigade should ensure that regular brigade activities occur, and that they incorporate the topics which trainees need to practise. For example, a brigade may run a drill with three trucks relay pumping. A CL trainee can act as OIC for their post-course practice, a BF trainee can choose and deploy the right hose for their post-course practice, and an AF trainee may calculate and set up the relay pumping for their post-course practice.

Brigade officers need to set up these activities, observe and provide feedback for the trainees, and sign the trainees' post-course practice log. However, they shouldn't just sign that the work was done, but also make notes of what was done well and what needs improving.

Where can you get information about running such activities?

Post-course practice session information can be found in RFS workbooks and course guides. You should also ask your local Learning and Development Officer for ideas.

What role can the brigade have in pre-incident planning?

Your work at an incident will be made easier if you have prepared for it, that is, if you



have gathered information that may be useful at an incident before it occurs. This process is pre-incident planning. Information regarding your local area is probably already stored in the minds of your members, but will be more accessible if outlined in a Pre-Incident Plan (PIP) in your appliance to which they can refer while responding. When brigades are out and about in the truck, make sure to keep an eye on things such as fuel levels, access roads, water sources and changes to gates.

You might draw up a specific PIP for an asset in your area, such as a nursing home, industrial park, isolated farmhouse or a stretch of highway. You should include such information as access paths and escape routes, the types of incident you're likely

to attend there (bush fire, structural fire, MVA, etc), water sources nearby, exposures if different areas are affected by fire and resources you might need to call in for certain incidents (e.g. NSWFB for a fuel tanker crash on highway).

CL trainees should try to do a PIP as part of their post-course practice.

Brigades can then run drills and scenarios based on the information in the PIP. This will make your brigade better prepared to protect your community, whilst giving members valuable and relevant skills practice.

Make sure you share your PIP with neighbouring brigades and your L&D Officer so others can benefit from the information too!

How can call-outs, After-Action Reviews (AAR) and maintenance activities also be made into "training"?

An After-Action Review (AAR) is a debriefing process conducted after an activity, which is designed to let participants identify what was done well and where improvements are needed. It follows a format of asking these questions:

What did we set out to do?
 What actually happened?
 Why did it happen?
 What are we going to do next time?
 What have we learnt?

Using information gained from an AAR, the brigade training officer can design activities to fix an identified shortfall in members' skills.

This process is not meant to embarrass people, but instead to help them learn from their mistakes to ensure that everyone gets it right the next time.

"MAINTAINING EQUIPMENT IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO REFRESH MEMBERS' KNOWLEDGE ON HOW TO USE IT"

Maintaining equipment is a good opportunity to refresh members' knowledge on how to use it. While ensuring the pump is working on the weekly checks, for example, the Training Officer may arrange for a demonstration of the foam proportioning system and show others how the foam filter is removed, cleaned and replaced. Regular checking of hoses (such as pressure tests or condition checks) may provide hose deployment practice.

What records do brigades need to keep of their training?

Brigade sign-in books should show who attended the station. Training Officers should keep a record of training dates and topics covered. Brigade officers should also sign off on any post-course practice sessions trainees have completed (in their workbooks).

Where can I find out more about brigade level training?

Check the materials released by L&D Systems and on MyRFS, ask your D/T/Z L&D Officer for advice, talk to members of neighbouring brigades and see what they're doing, check and keep watching this space in the Bushfire Bulletin!

If you have a training question that you would like answered, email it to the editor at Bushfire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

FOR THE KIDS

Dear Bushfire bulletin
people

I have made a picture
that I want to go in
one of the Bushfire
bulletin and it is about
a fire near a lake called
Lake George near
the town of Coleraine
and both of our fire
trucks and my dad
was in the little fire
truck that is in the picture.
Both of the firetrucks are called
7A and 1A.



FIREWISE Fact

– A well-prepared house protects us from bush fires.

Bush Fire Safety – Keeping our houses safe from bush fires

Embers!

One of the main problems associated with bush fires are the embers that blow in the wind in front of the fire - as well as the embers that can be blown around for many hours after the main fire has passed.

To protect your house from bush fires and ember attack, you need to have a look at the things that could burn if embers are blown into your property. Leaves, twigs and dry grass can be a problem, but with a little work the leaves and twigs can be removed and the grass kept short and green.

You can help mum and dad by offering to clear away any leaf litter

around your house to make your house **FIREWISE!**



In each edition of the Bushfire Bulletin we will provide you with a new **FIREWISE** Fact so that you can help mum and dad to keep your house safe from fire. Keep these facts on the fridge or somewhere safe so that you know what to do!

You can also send your drawings and letters to:

The Editor, Bushfire Bulletin,
Locked Mail Bag 17 Granville NSW 2142
or by email to:

bushfire.bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

You just might see your contribution in the next edition!



BUSHFIRE SAFETY

Practice these exercises in the school ground or when out on excursions.

If you are in the bush and a fire starts it is important not to **panic**. Do not run. **Stop** and **think**.

Do not run up hill. Look for an **open space**. Find a ditch or other **low** spot, or get close to a **rock**, bank or fallen **tree**.

Lie face down as low as possible. **Cover** your skin.

Kids should not go in the **bush** on their own. There should always be an **adult** with them

The words in bold are hidden in this puzzle.

A	D	U	L	T	R	E	V	O	C
H	E	C	A	P	S	T	T	B	S
C	P	A	N	I	C	H	R	A	T
T	B	U	S	H	E	I	E	N	O
I	S	K	I	N	I	N	E	K	P
D	R	O	C	K	L	K	T	W	C
O	P	E	N	E	R	I	F	O	A
R	U	N	M	C	I	L	R	L	Q

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Overall, how appealing did you find this edition?

- Very appealing
- Fairly appealing
- Neutral
- Fairly unappealing
- Very unappealing

Comments:

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For each of the following, please indicate or comment on the features you were interested in reading in this issue (tick column applicable)

	Yes, I was interested	No, I wasn't interested	I will use this section
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General News	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Operations Pull out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spotlight on Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Open Day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

- Region South Fires
- 2007 Open Day
- Regional Exercise Wrap Up
- RFS Management Conference
- Australia Day Commendations
- St Florian's Day Awards
- 2007 Community Education Conference

PLUS

More volunteer interviews, tips on training and brigade diaries



Greg Pracy, DC of Illawong Brigade, Sutherland, sits atop the new Illawong One Bravo tanker for fire protection at local Australia Day Celebrations.

Units in attendance for Comm Ed/PR were Illawong 1B, Menai 1B, NSWFB Stn 90 Tanker. Photo taken by Dean Symons



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